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# JOHN GUILDERSTRING'S SIN.

A Novel.

BY

C. FRENCH RICHARDS.

He's sowing wild oats,  
He'll outgrow his sins,  
And make a good man yet.

COMMON SAYING.

A fallen woman is shunned by the good, and left alone with her bitterness and shame and death. Shall men be guilty of like deeds, and not suffer like degradation? Ask God if this be just!

ANON—.



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# JOHN GUILDERSTRING'S SIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *Face to Face.*

I—that egotistical I—first person singular, feminine—for I am a feminine woman—let that be distinctly understood on my debut into the world of feminine men and masculine women—I am a woman. That one expressive dissyllable contains, compressed within its limits, the essence of a type of excellence that I may not have attained; and in claiming the conventional phrase, I do not pretend to the exalted idea of perfection which men of sentiment and poetry associate with it. I am merely a woman, whom God in His good providence has seen fit to bring forth out of human chaos, endowed with all the passions, frailties, and human nature that constitute flesh and blood, and form an ingredient in all character.

In adopting the first person, let me not be accused of egotism. I have always maintained that, in literature

as well as in diplomacy, there is nothing to be gained in veiling one's self under the obscurity of a second personage. I prefer meeting the public face to face, clothed only in my own individuality. It certainly will lend a charm to our intercourse that otherwise would be lacking.

As I like to encounter a man with soul flashing from his eyes, and enthusiasm beaming on his countenance—his open brow a page that I can gaze upon and peruse, his every feature and lineament depicting passions that I can trace to their sources and interpret at my pleasure, his discourse proved by each emotion revealed by the personality displayed there.

As I like to meet a fellow-creature face to face in my intercourse with him; so I shall abandon the fallacious disguise of a fashionable mask, and meet the public face to face, and heart to heart. I ask not a lenient judgment for my frailties and errors; but into whatever indiscretion my pen may have led me, I only ask the reader to suspend his harsher judgment, and remember that I am a woman; and a tremor of mute anguish creeps into my heart when I think and remember what it is to be a woman. Tears are for woman; sighs and sobbings are for woman; courage, courage, they say, is man's.

Perhaps so, for I am weak, very weak, as I sit down here and look into the dim tracery of a dead face. Oh, the unsullied atmosphere that clings about his memory now, the sinless love that rises up and

battles for his forgiveness, the prayers that wrestle with my soul and struggle up to the throne—these are the giants that conquer; and I tremble and struggle with them until the weak human nature gains the mastery, and I press the trinket to my lips and weep—weep because I'm a woman; because I loved him with a woman's love; loved him!—Loved who? I look within the golden case and read the initials; the artisan has executed his work well; only two small letters. Should Eve weep in Eden? Should woman weep for love? Ah, thereby hangs a tale—the story of a life; not the old, old story; a story of to-day, of a woman's struggle and victory—my story.

## CHAPTER II.

*Girlhood.*

It was an old house; and, like an old man's visage, its face was wrinkled, begrimed, and grey with the stains of time. The interstices of the walls and the shingles were verdant with an emerald, mossy green; and, with this hue surmounting the rotten old gables, and the great lightning rod leaning like a bayonet over the highest chimney top, it looked not unlike an old Hibernian soldier in his native military garb.

I have lain for hours together under an old willow that curtained the porch; and, giving my imagination wing, have seen the great giant standing there in the twilight, ghost-like and still, with its windows lit from within, like great eyes glaring out upon me, and its huge arms stretching on either side, as if to enclasp me in their embrace; the great naked roof standing out like brawny shoulders against the dark sky; the immense bayonet, and the smoke, like a plume curling from the brow of a gladiator; in the kaleidoscope of fancy I remember nothing that made so strong an impression on my young mind as this idea of a tenement possessing personality.

Beneath these old gables I was ushered into the world—the stage on which I am to play a part as a character in this book.

If you ask how I came here, or why I came here at all, I must respectfully refer you for information to good Dr. Woodruff, who brought me into the world, and who is supposed to know all about it; at all events, I solemnly protest against answering such a question, on the positive declaration that I know nothing at all about the matter.—

I once remember asking my mother the question for myself, and she told me, with a smile, that Doctor Woodruff brought me to her. I believed this until my further curiosity prompted me to ask where he came across me, when she told me I was found in the woods. My better judgment rebelled against being found in the society of owls and bats, and I no longer sought to penetrate the mystery that surrounded my entrance into mortality with so much obscurity, but was content in my ignorant bliss. Notwithstanding all this, however, as I have told you, one cold winter's morning, in the year 18—, I, Martha Klopenstene, was given a habitation and a name amongst the living; one more soul flung out from creative power amid earth's millions; one more drop in the great seething ocean of humanity. Here, amongst the acres of my paternal home, I lived the short and evanescent life of girlhood.

It was not a place of romantic surroundings. A



great pine grove drew a dark boundary line on the east; and here, amid its sighing branches, was my dream-land. I would wander for hours amid its chequered shades and watch the heraldic precursors of coming storms. At such times my soul seemed to take wings unto itself, and my mind expand with the sublime thoughts that filled my brain, until, almost frightened, I would recoil with terror from myself. The sough of the wind amongst the branches, the eternal symphony of sounds, touched a chord of deep melancholy within me that charmed me as music would a serpent, and I would coil myself down on the soft, yielding leaves and undergrowth, and, closing my eyes, lie for hours listening to this unearthly pæan of nature, until the weight of its sadness and woe overpowered me; then I would shout and sing, with all my soul up in arms, striving to deaden the solemn hymn, until with my feeble voice I felt like a great soprano soaring high up above the grand deep basso of the old spirits of the pines.

On the west the distant horizon was unbroken, and the eye at sunset caught a glimpse of the hidden inner glory; when the great blood-shot eye of day veiled its lid behind the west and left ajar the door of his exit, I formed my first conceptions of heaven.

I was left so much to myself about this period, that I should have learned little about such a place had not my invalid mother called me occasionally to her bedside, and, laying her wasted hand on my head, told



me about the temple not made with hands and eternal in the beyond.

My poor mother invariably ended by saying, again and again : "Poor Martha!" "Poor child!" "What will become of thee when I am in heaven!" I never doubt but she is there.

These lessons, however, made little impression on me at the time, and I went out again to my old haunts amongst the pines, the same neglected, half-wild, untamable creature that I was before. Nature was my God, my only confidante. I would find myself muttering thoughts aloud in the lonely woods; in fact I formed an early habit of talking and communing with myself aloud, soliloquizing.

I remember in a fit of anger I once swore an oath—a childish oath—and it was then I was conscious what a great and controlling power nature had over me. It was uttered aloud, and my lips no sooner formed the words than the great pulsing nostril of inanimate creation seemed to breathe forth a censure; the mighty pines stirred their giant arms and sighed forth a gentle admonition; the flowers looked up with a pitying rebuke; remorse seized me, until a conviction settled down into my heart that I had sinned—had profaned the holy presence of nature with a blasphemy.

From the front of the house a broad lane, shaded on either side by trees, swept directly north until it joined the road that ran eastward to the village of

Haddonsfield and westward to what was then known as Hopkins' Mills. At the end of this lane, which was macadamized with red gravel taken from a quarry on the roadside, was a hill sloping towards the village, at the base of which stood a tenement house belonging to my father.

Just beyond this house was a piece of fenced ground used as a graveyard, sold to the county by my father as a place of sepulture for its poor.

This secluded spot, on the environs of the woods, was a place of much superstitious dread to me. I never passed it in the light of broad day without a keen sense of pity for the lonely dead, lying there in earth's bosom, their little hillocks sunken, and no headstones to mark the spot; not even a name or a date; no church near to hallow their resting-place with the shadow of its spire. This first impression of death made me recoil from futurity; and the great shadow of my soberer moods was death, the grave, and this lonely resting-place, with its poor and nameless sleepers.

## CHAPTER III.

*A Night Adventure,—“She was beautiful, but lost, lost.”*

IN the early autumn of 184—, my mother was taken suddenly ill. It was at dusk, and there was no one in the house but my father and myself. He called me to him, and patting me tenderly on the cheek—the warmest token of affection that I had received from him for a long time—made me acquainted with the imminent danger that attended my mother’s sudden illness, and then bade me haste with all speed to the village, about two miles distant, and summon Dr. Woodruff, my mother’s physician ; and he added . “If he’s not at home, call on Dr. Thornton.” The latter was an allopathic physician of the old school, and was employed by my father, while the former was a disciple of Hahnemann, a homœopathist, and attended on my mother.

This was the only point on which I ever knew my parents to seriously differ.

I thought of the darkness, the lonely road through the woods, and of all the stories I had heard of ghosts, the haunted graveyard at the lane’s end, and of a murder once supposed to have been committed

at the same spot. I stood still as if paralysed, and from my terrified soul burst forth but one word—"Father!" I must have spoken it imploringly, for a look of pity shot into his eyes for a moment, and then he bade me, in his stern, severe manner, begone and do his bidding.

I cast one look back upon the pale and suffering face of my mother, wasted and worn, I think, more by some hidden grief than by disease, and wrapping myself in my slight mantle, I shot out across the lawn and along the lonely lane with all the speed I was mistress of.

The twilight had not yet lost the golden suffusion that the autumnal sunsets leave behind them, and I passed the haunted ground, the graveyard, and the pines without much trepidation, although I did not encounter any one on the road but a drunken laborer lying on the wayside in harmless imbecility.

My cheeks aglow with the exercise and excitement of my hurried journey, I was glad when the lights of the village began to twinkle before me. I met no one that I knew in the village street, save old Deacon Mudge, who hurried by without even recognising me.

At last, tired and out of breath, I reached the fine showy residence of Dr. Woodruff.

Physicians always have fine houses and silver door plates, and in a village like Haddonsfield it was only necessary to search for this glistening ornament, and you might know that physics were an appendage to

it; so I was not at a loss in finding Dr. Woodruff's office.

I pulled the bell energetically. Ah, how eagerly had many another applicant pulled that same bell, with, perhaps, despair in his heart and no gold in his pocket.

I waited patiently what seemed to me a very long time, until I heard the shuffling of steps, which proved to be the housekeeper coming down stairs. I must have looked pale and meagre indeed, as she caught a glimpse of me through the half-open door. She looked at me for some moments silently, as if to satisfy herself that I was not a beggar come to demand a share of her charity, and then in the high, peculiar, bell-like tone common to most housekeepers, she said :

"What do you want, child?"

"Is Dr. Woodruff at home, ma'am?" I said, respectfully, my voice still tremulous with the rapid palpitation of my heart. She did not stop to ask me what I wanted with him, but, leaving the front door open, she knocked at the door of the front room, on the window curtain of which was printed, in gold letters, "Dr. Woodruff, Office," and I could see was lighted up within.

"Come in," answered a voice that I recognised at once as the Doctor's. Pushing the office door ajar, she said, in a mock ironical tone:

"Doctor, is this the day for the reception of the poor? The marble has just been scrubbed, the entry

cleaned, and the bell knob polished ; and here comes one of your pauper patients demanding admittance."

I did not wait to hear his reply or what further she might have said ; I was insulted. The blood fled from my face. I was cold with anger, and rushing across the threshold, regardless of consequences, I struck her—yes, I struck that harsh, cruel woman a blow with all the might I was mistress of, and, pushing her aside, I entered the presence of Dr. Woodruff with a proud defiance that made his eyes flash with admiration, even amid his astonishment at my sudden appearance before him.

"She lies, Dr. Woodruff; I come not to beg. I come because father sent me, and to tell you that mother is very ill, and he wants you to come out to the Pines as soon as you can."

I looked that hard woman directly in the face, and had I not mentioned the Doctor's name, he might have supposed that it was to her the communication was addressed. She heard me through with impatience ; and sneering disdainfully, vanished from the room.

The Doctor said nothing then, but in after years he told me how his admiration was enkindled for me in that moment when, forgetting my girlhood, I so boldly rebuked his housekeeper.

Packing together a few vials in his saddle-bags, he prepared to set out immediately on his journey to the Pines. A feeling of horror now seized me ; and I would have begged the Doctor to place me on



his horse before him, had not that instinctive fear of ridicule, so common to children, prevented me from expressing my terror. I had fondly hoped that he would go in his carriage; but alas, too late; the groom let go his hold on the rein, the Doctor mounted and sped away with the speed of the whirlwind, leaving me standing there desolate and alone on the village pave.

I summoned up all the courage at my command, and started with a beating heart homeward. I walked rapidly until I gained the last light that twinkled on the street, and then I was to bid farewell to my friend the light, and go out to meet and wrestle with my mortal enemy the darkness.

How often I turned to watch that light, glimmering fainter and fainter in the distance, I know not. I never was conscious of fear at all when wandering through the gloomy pines in daylight. I could hear the serpent rustle among the leaves as he glided away, come suddenly upon a herd of half-wild cattle or a baying hound and not start; but night, and a dark night like this, I recoiled from it. If grown persons were only aware of the superlative horror children have for darkness, of the mortal dread and terror that shakes every bone in their puny bodies when left alone at such hours as this, I think there would be fewer cowards in the rising generation.

On leaving the village I walked rapidly until the last ray of light was lost in the thickening darkness;



and then starting, I ran at full speed until I reached the foot of the hill. The wind whistled by my ears and brushed my face like the rustling touch of garments. The sere leaves that fell eddying to the ground with a crackling sound, scarce perceptible by day, partook of what seemed to me the ghost-like stealth of giant footsteps. I imagined I was pursued. I was afraid to look behind; I dreaded what was before me. A huge old gnarled stump that I had seen a hundred times by day lying in the road, once sent all the blood back to my heart; and a cow lowing in an adjoining field made me halt and listen, trembling with fear; while a cold sweat broke out on my forehead when I came again upon the drunken laborer moaning by the wayside at the same spot where I had left him earlier in the evening.

I had now reached the tenement house, but it was dark and still as death, no tenant having occupied it for as long back as I could remember. The graveyard was yet to be passed; the whitewashed fence was visible through the darkness, and only hidden by occasional clusters of shrubbery and groups of trees. In order to shorten my journey somewhat, and my fear slightly abating, I determined to climb the graveyard fence and cross the corner where no interments had as yet been made. I had some difficulty in clambering over the briers and wild hedge-bushes, but I had no sooner alighted within the inclosure than a figure, draped in white, met my view.

This figure, which my child imagination soon elevated to the dignity of a supernatural visitor, was apparently leaning on a staff. It was before hidden by the trees, and now that it stood revealed, its face was turned towards me. My fear of the supernatural gained the ascendancy of my reason; at the sight of that white form standing there still and motionless in the cold autumnal starlight the blood froze in my veins. I strove to speak, to scream, but I could do neither, my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. I uttered a strange, unnatural, guttural sound, and fell in a swoon to the earth. For some minutes I was perfectly inanimate. I knew nothing until, suddenly awaking from my unconscious stupor with a start, I found myself in the arms of a stout laborer. I cannot define my sensations of relief; it was like awakening from a horrible dream. The man was bathing my brow with cool water, and sitting upon a new made grave, upon which the turf had not yet grown. A spade was lying on a pile of loose earth and stones that formed a pyramid beside a newly dug grave, and a few yards distant was a rough wooden box containing a corpse awaiting burial.

The man was in his shirt-sleeves and whistled some low tune to me as I awoke.

"Oh," I cried, "where am I?"

"Here, my little chit, safe in the arms of John Day, the grave-digger."

"Where is the ghost?" I asked, the old terror seizing

me, and then, ashamed at having betrayed myself, I added :

“John, is it you? and who are you going to put in that hole?”

“Oh, my little lady, I seldom trouble myself as to the names of them as lies here; but this was a beautiful, a poor forsaken creature. I heard her name—let me see;” and he struck his fist upon the rough box so sharply as to startle me with its echo, while he strove to recall it from his memory.

“Now I have it,” he said, after a time; “it was an outish name; Charlotte Cleytone; that was it, that was it; my mother’s name was Charlotte, and it will be many a year before I forget that.”

“Why do they bury one so beautiful in this dismal spot, John?” said I, pityingly. “Has she no father or mother; no relations, no friends?”

“Oh, she was beautiful, to be sure; but lost, lost, my little lady. You have yet to learn that there are acts committed which will shut one out from even a father’s and a mother’s heart, and leave one friendless in the midst of friends and relatives. You are too young to understand these things yet, and God grant you never may; but come, you must get home out of the damp night air, and I must finish this hole before daylight.”

Taking my little hand in his rough, weather-beaten palm, he shut down upon it like a vice, and led me along without another word, while

I mused on my adventure and that strange young creature nailed so rudely in the rough wooden box, and his words, "Her name, Charlotte Cleytone; she was beautiful, but lost, lost." What did it mean? I bade him good night, and was met at the door by the housekeeper, Mrs. Whipple, who had been to make a call at a neighboring farm-house, and was glad enough to find that my mother's illness prevented her from asking me any questions about my prolonged absence.

I went quietly to bed, and Mrs. Whipple came and tucked in my coverlid, asking me if I had said my prayers. In spite of my nocturnal adventure, I slept very soundly until early morning.

## CHAPTER IV

*For Ever, and Ever, and Ever.*

MY father was in the habit of ringing a huge bell at early morn, and woe unto the sleeper who disregarded its summons.

I no sooner heard its brazen clang than, shaking the weight of slumber from my eyelids, I prepared for the visit which I had determined on making to witness the burial of that poor, unfortunate Charlotte Cleytone. The morning was a close, chill, gloomy, and foggy one, common to our early autumn, and the sun would not shake himself out of the mist for some hours later. I took my course along a secluded by-path that made a sinuous way through the pines, and ended at the southern part of the lonely habitation of the dead. The sere and falling leaf is not an inspiring theme for meditative thought; and, as they dropped, one by one, from bough and twig, an indescribable sadness pervaded my childish thoughts that I could not check. The golden maple hung out its yellow banners in striking contrast with the flaming dogwood, the deeper orange of the sassafras, and the lighter scarlet of the sumac.

There were far more gorgeous tints from nature's palette painted against that dark, sombre background of pines and framed in the mist, than ever Weber's exquisite pencil threw into his gloriously tinged sunsets. Autumn was to me the season of seasons; the sere and death-hectic leaf was the brightest ornament in the chaplet that crowned the year. Spring had its flowers, summer its fruits, and old winter his diamond-dust of snow; but autumn brought an argosy of thoughts, of fancies, and dreams. My childhood was one season of revery; I had not as yet learned to think deeply, to reason, and therefore I loved the still hazy autumn because it humored my moody nature.

I had not as yet recovered fully from the effects of my nocturnal visit to this spot on the previous night; but, like most young persons, these things failed to trouble me deeply after seven hours of sound sleep. I was somewhat assured as I neared the spot at hearing the cheery whistle of John Day, and a little surprised at the hardihood he had acquired that could stand there whistling over the open grave. I knew little of what human nature is capable, then, or I might have said with Hamlet—

“Has this fellow no feeling of his business? he sings at grave-making.”

And Horatio's answer—

“Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.”



He ceased whistling and assisted me to climb the fence, which was so encumbered with briars and poisonous vines that it was not an easy undertaking for myself.

Reaching over and taking me in his strong arms, he lifted me clear of the hedge and set me on my feet within the inclosure. It was a matter of little surprise for him to meet me thus early in the morning, for I had frequently come across John Day in my rambles, and we had formed an intimacy that was characteristic between the weak and strong. I always would cling in girlhood to anything that embodied strength in any form, and later years form no exception to this rule. Women cleave to men like ivy to the oak. Weak, frail, and beautiful women are sure to fancy great, strong, physical monstrosities.

It is a law of our nature and of God. Weak minds should seek the companionship of strong ones; hopeless spirits be linked to those buoyant hearts that see naught but rainbow hues in the bubble of life. One extreme will act upon and neutralize the other. Add an acid to a caustic and the result will produce a beautiful crystal. Where the characters of a man and woman are the most extreme opposites, there look for the strongest love or the most inveterate hatred. A beautiful wife will declare her husband handsome, even though he be as ugly as sin, if she looks at him through the eyes of wifely



love. There is no one thing in the wide, wide world that gives me a more exalted opinion of human nature than to see a frail woman sheltered by the arms and leaning on the bosom of a great, strong, gigantic man. It is a living picture that only God can paint—weakness in the arms of strength. But to return to my subject.

“The early bird catches the worm, my lady,” said John Day. “This is a saying of my father’s, which he used to repeat to me time and again in my boyhood.”

He broke off suddenly and went out towards the road, and left me sitting there alone on his great-coat, which he had spread for me on the damp ground. I had remained thus but a few moments, and was beginning to shiver a little with the chill consequent upon my inaction, when I heard the muffled sound of approaching carriage-wheels. It was not long before a fashionable hack, with caparisoned steeds, dashed out from behind the copse, and halted in an obscure spot, where it was shut out entirely from the view of any one who might happen to pass on the road.

It was some time before John Day returned, but when at last he entered the yard, he was accompanied by two strangers. The elder of the two I should say had seen fifty winters, and the traces of sorrow in the deep and furrowed lines of his face made him seem somewhat older even than that. There was a firmness about his compressed lips, and an intense depth in his eyes that made me think of a hero after battle. The

younger man, his companion, I did not particularly notice ; I only remember that he whispered cheerful words of assurance to the elder gentleman, and supported him with his right arm as they drew near to the corpse. The countenance of the elder stranger was very pale, and I remember hearing his teeth chatter, and a tremor shook his body as he stood there, his face expressing a mortal agony I hope never to witness again, and his hands clasped across his bosom in mute despair. His companion noticed his distress, and, admonishing him to forbear his purpose, said :

“Come away, sir, this will kill you. Mr. Cleytone, I implore you not to have the box opened ; you have a death-damp on you now ; you are perilling your life standing here in the chill morning air.”

The old man spoke not a word, but motioned John Day to proceed to remove the covering ; even as he lifted his arm, it fell limp and nerveless to his side. He was a man of good physical stature, but his energy and muscular endurance availed him naught, for, when the last screw was removed and the lid about to be lifted from the corpse, he would have fallen to the earth had he not been supported by his companion.

“You are killing yourself, sir ; let us go at once to the carriage ; come, assist us. my good man ; nail up the lid, and bury the corpse without us ; it is better he should not see her.”

This seemed to rouse the dormant mind of the elder

stranger, and, pushing away his escort, he said, in an imperative voice :

" Wm. Hartless, you are not a father, and God save you from being one, or you could feel for my grief!" and he bade John Day remove the lid. The two men gathered closer as the lid was removed. It was a strange scene there in the grey dawn of that September morning. The old man stood transfixed, his hands clasped tightly on his bosom ; not a tear fell from his stony eyes for many minutes, but with his gaze fixed upon the corpse, he seemed frozen to a statue.

Oh, the horror of such a sight! If he had only wept as I did there in my childish grief.

Only his eyes, his brilliant flashing eyes, changed from hue to hue ; his stern mouth relented not, his proud head maintained its rectitude ; no sorrow heaved his bosom as he looked down on the corpse in momentary silence. At last I noticed the mouth quiver in its corners, the eyes soften with a dewy warmth, and the hands relax their clasp upon his bosom. Bending over the dead form, he knelt down by the rude box, and with the tears raining from his eyes, he seemed in his soft and childlike voice to be parleying with death. I could not hear all he said ; I only caught fragments, for his sentences were broken with sobs.

" Poor, poor child ; poor Lottie ! Lost to me now for ever. I have forgotten all, forgiven all, but she

cannot come back to me now. This bosom should have been her resting-place, and do they lay her here? O God! here, here, here! Here, to lie for ever, and ever, and ever."

Imprinting a kiss on the clay-cold brow, he arose hurriedly and said:

"Come, Hartless, quick! quick! Take me away from here; take me away!"

I heard him still sobbing as they neared the carriage, and caught incoherent fragments of conversation. The carriage-door closed with a slam, and the vehicle rolled away along the same road that brought it, towards the village, with its strange occupants, who had come upon the stage of my life like actors, of whose coming and going I knew nothing.

John Day did not return immediately, and gathering a few flowers from the wild hedge, I made a breast-knot, and, tying it with grass, placed it on the bosom of the corpse.

It was so beautiful, that in spite of my childish fear of death I imprinted a kiss on the brow, and stole away by the path that brought me, with that cry of anguish ringing in my ears: "For ever, and ever, and ever."

## CHAPTER V.

*Charlotte Cleytone—Materia Medica—The Shadow of Death.*

HERETOFORE my life had been one devoid of incident, but now it seemed stirred like a quiet lake breaking into ripples from a stone cast rudely into its still waters. I pitied the fate of that poor girl, friendless and an outcast, lying buried there in that unhalloed spot, amid the poor of the county. Her delicate face, with its sensuous beauty e'en in death, haunted me like a spirit demanding retribution; she must have a history; she was not always the outcast. The interest taken in her by the strangers, the old gentleman calling her his child, his Lottie; these things awakened my curiosity, and set me to speculating about the terrible sin she must have committed, the enormity of which could bring such an awful punishment upon her. I would sit by her grave and muse for hours, but the truth was not long in thrusting itself upon my mind; I was growing older, and began to launch out imaginary barques into the world that was lying out like an inexplicable dream before me. I thought of the man, free and unrepached, striding on in the paths of society, and

then I looked down on the little mound with its eternal sleeper.

At my request John Day had placed a wooden slab at the head of the grave, and on its face was traced in black letters:

CHARLOTTE CLEYTONE,  
*Buried September 10, 185—*  
HISTORY UNKNOWN.

This was all I knew of the poor unfortunate creature lying below; and little did I think that when that unknown history should be revealed, those very words would be seared on my heart as with a burning coal. I gathered the gorgeously tinted leaves of autumn, and made wreaths for its adornment. I bade John Day keep the turf green at all seasons, and out of his sincere affection for me I believe he performed the duty faithfully as long as he lived.

But this was not all. Other things of great moment were occurring around me. My mother continued to grow worse, for consumption was gnawing at the vitals.

I happened to be present one morning at a consultation which was held in the old familiar sitting-room between Drs. Woodruff and Thornton. It was then that the awful truth flashed suddenly upon me; I was soon to be motherless. My mother had been an invalid for a long time back, and although I have spoken little of our intercourse, we had been much



together. The only redeeming traits in my childish nature were planted there by my mother, and I loved her beyond any other earthly being. The consultation alluded to was heard only in part by me. It was a hot contest between those two old followers of Esculapius. They were seated on either side of a little table, on which stood a half-emptied decanter and several glasses. Could my mother have heard them, she might have likened them to two hungry vultures quarrelling for her blood. I think they did not hear me enter, for the door was partly open, and I trod very softly. I heard Dr. Thornton say :

“I tell you, Woodruff, she cannot last another twenty-four hours.”

“And yet you would continue your heretical course of administering nauseous doses of poisonous drugs, to the infinite torture of a body whose soul will take wing, *secundum naturam*, in twenty-four hours for eternity. I cannot understand your physics, Doctor,” said the homœopathist.

If there were not many more exalted and noble traits in Dr. Woodruff's character, my heart would always have warmed towards him for these words. The idea of racking the body with bitter and painful remedies, and making experimental doses to save a life that is fast setting behind the hills of eternity, has always been distasteful to me. If death is knocking at the door, let it be quietly opened, and the soul go out of its tenement in peace.

Dr. Woodruff was a fine representation of the father of medicine; he possessed a high and expansive brow, an aquiline nose, dark, penetrating eyes, hair slightly flecked with grey, rather an effeminate mouth, and alimentiveness largely developed, with prominent cheek bones. Withal, he was a handsome man. Philanthropy, generosity, and gallantry combined with blandness and dignity. I never remember seeing him without his rather delicate and effeminate hand was gloved with kid. He always entered my mother's chamber with his right hand bared, and his unworn glove clasped in his left. He had a peculiar habit of wiping his pen on the inside of this glove after writing a prescription. His slight corpulency argued somewhat to the disapproval of his favorite maxim, "*Similia similibus curantur*," for I doubt whether the administration of his aliment in homœopathic doses would have been beneficial to his health.

Dr. Thornton was neither dignified nor handsome. He was one of those ordinary men we meet with often in life, who have amassed fortunes, are respectable and well thought of, but in whom we can detect nothing but mediocrity, and oftentimes is it a matter of wonder to us how such men can succeed as lawyers, physicians, and merchants.

I do not think he was conscious of the great responsibility that rested upon him as one holding the keys of life and death, and I should much have pre-



ferred being ushered into eternity with Dr. Doctor Woodruff's calm, dignified face looking down over the confines of earth upon me as I launched out on the brink of eternity. It would lend courage to the faltering soul, and give strength to the arm that plied the untried oar.

After much unnecessary word-wasting on the part of Thornton, and much sound reasoning and common sense on the part of Woodruff, the former conceded the point in dispute—that nothing remained but to render the patient as comfortable as possible, and make her exit from life as pleasant as circumstances would warrant. I felt somewhat relieved at this result. My mother's weary spirit was to be left in peace while it plumed its wings for its flight over the dark waters.

Dr. Thornton was the village apothecary, and I have no doubt this was one reason why he insisted so strenuously on prescribing for the patient, even in her dying hours. If a post-mortem were held after the death of any one of his patients, I fear the verdict would invariably be—Died from the effects of poison administered by the hands of Dr. ———. But, stop. Perhaps I am too severe a judge. The Doctor still lives and pursues his avocation. I remember a Latin inscription that he had painted in gold letters on a sign over the entrance to his shop—*Amicus humani generis*—a friend of the human race. It was a long time before I could make out its significance, and now

I laugh when I think of it, and suggest *aut vincere aut mori*, as a more appropriate one, because the Doctor's maxim was undoubtedly to kill or cure. You would have coincided with me, perhaps, had you stood for hours in his shop, striving to make English out of the hieroglyphical Latin that was displayed on the drawers and bottles. There was *Hydrarg. cum Creta* on a black bottle in a row by the door. I remember it was mysterious in significance to me, and I was ashamed of my ignorance when the Doctor told me it was only mercury and chalk. There was *Sal Epsom* on a drawer. If the village dressmaker's name had not been Sallie Smith, I should have taken it for a relative of hers; but this lady I was certainly unacquainted with. Then there was *Antimonii Tartras*, another name for simple Tartar Emetic; *Hydrarg. Chloridum Corrosivum*, a *nom de plume* for Corrosive Sublimate; and I might have eaten arsenic under the cognomen of *Arsenicum*, as sugar, and not have been the wiser. I began to feel afraid of Dr. Thornton after my first visit to his shop. What wonder, with all the poisons in the *Materia Medica* at his fingers' ends, nicely hidden under Latin masks, the Doctor fooled the dear confiding public, and cajoled his patients into the belief that his remedies were the simplest in the world. And now one word about this prevalent practice of writing prescriptions in a dead language. I say that it shows a lack of manliness to work thus under a mask.

Good deeds seek the light rather than darkness and obscurity. If a physician prescribes for me bread-pills, let him write it out in plain, broad English, and I will take them as bread-pills. They will have no better effect if concealed under a subterfuge. Every man has a right to know what passes into his own stomach, and nature has provided him with taste and smell that he may reject what is hurtful; and if so in regard to food, how much more so in regard to medicine? But *de mortuo nil nisi bonum*, I suppose, I must adopt as a motto.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Over the River—I become Acquainted with my Father.*

I CANNOT lay my mother's death at the door of either man's conscience. I only know that my father came to me one morning with his eyes suffused with tears, and a cry of "O God! she's dead!" on his lips. I only remember the cold, still face, the coffin, the covered mirrors, the hearse with its black nodding plumes, and my emotions at the time. I was yet too young to feel the momentous truth in all its solemn realities, as some years later I did. It was a large concourse gathered at my mother's funeral. I remember looking out of my father's carriage, and striving to catch a glimpse of the end of the cortège as it wound slowly and solemnly down the hill.

My poor mother never would have dreamed of possessing so numerous a circle of friends during life. It shocked even my sensibility. Many whom I had never seen cross my father's threshold during life and illness, came now to witness the grand finale—the grave; some out of curiosity, many out of sincere respect, a few out of friendship, very few impelled by love. I think it would be a consolation to me on

my death-bed to issue funeral invitations only to those whom I grapple to me in life with the iron bond of friendship. It is a lamentable and censurable mockery. I have known persons enter the house which was the earthly home of the holy dead with no other desire than to gratify a shallow and heartless curiosity, to gaze on the trappings of the coffin, to read the inscription on the plate, to inspect the shroud, and afterwards make the corpse the subject of idle gossip, saying, with mock gravity: "How sweet she looked, poor creature!" I believe I should stir in my shroud to rebuke those who would lean over my narrow house with a hypocritical lie on their very faces, which are long drawn out, while a smile lurks in the heart, perhaps, at the figure cut by my poor relations, who gather around me with sincere and heartfelt grief depicted in face and eye, and whose hearts are full of the shadowy presence. We had, however, few relatives, rich or poor, within the borders of the State, and I only remember an introduction to my Uncle Philip and his quiet, demure daughter Lucy, who, I remember, sobbed and cried in a refuse-to-be-comforted sort of way about my mother's death, and who seemed to take the matter a great deal worse to heart than I did; I think I bore it with a sort of philosophic heroism. One good resulted from my mother's demise. My father and I, after a lifelong estrangement, were beginning at last to become more intimately acquainted with each other, and we went

about it in an odd manner, too—more like strangers breaking through the ice of civility than father and daughter assuming the attitude of love which God designed as our heritage.

I remember the first collision we had. The old house had grown lonely and desolate to him now, and he seldom remained in doors long at a time unless in the evenings; nor indeed did I, for the autumn winds made a sad and mournful sound amongst the old gables, that made me shiver sometimes. I was passing my third term at the county school, that old black, dingy, dreary-looking, one-story school-house, standing in a grove of oaks, and to whose threshold a cow-path made a bee-line across my father's fields. There, good old Miss Joyce was mistress of the ruler and the birch. She might have been severe on the young and tender palms, and perhaps the tingling sensation she once sent all over my muscular system has left a prejudice in my mind against country school-marms in general; but she has gone to her long, long home, and we will not assail the prostrate dead who cannot defend themselves.

It was a cold blustering evening in the later autumn. We were gathered about the cheerful fire in the old sitting-room; this was the only apartment in the house in which I felt perfectly at home. The whole place had an air of unassuming comfort. The soft, subdued color of the carpet, the tastily paper-



ed walls, the mellow flow of light that fell from beneath a shade adorned with gaudy pictures of Oriental ornithology, the huge sea-shells with their *couleur de rose* cheeks on the mantel, the great clock with a half-moon on its brazen face, that ticked loudly in the corner, and a picture that hung between the windows of a lady, young and beautiful, which I had been told was my mother in her girlish freshness—these lent a charm to my father's sitting-room.

My father, on this particular evening, in conformity with his usual custom, was perusing the columns of the *Evening Press*, a paper that came to him from the city by daily mail. The housekeeper, Mrs. Whipple, was seated opposite, her glasses astride her nose, and her needle busily plying some household work. I had determined on the perusal of a questionable work of fiction. I had studied my geography and lexicon until I was seized with a sort of mental nausea that comes nearer to the physical one of sea-sickness than anything else I can liken it to. I do not remember what prompted me to read this book, unless it was the mystery which was rather deepened than explained by a wood-cut representing a man leaping from a great height down a dark and rocky precipice without any apparent cause. I had seen few novels; for my father's library, besides his works on agriculture and chemistry (for he was an intelligent farmer), consisted mainly of the "Pilgrim's Progress," "Baxter's Saints' Rest," and the "Family Bible." There was a

great red fire glowing on the hearth, and a great fire burning in my brain as I read the description of an exciting race for life which led the hero of the romance to precipitate himself from that fatal height, as represented in the picture. I had reached this point, when my father looked up from his paper, and, glancing over my shoulder, his eye fell on the wood-cut. He seemed to be aware for the first time that he had a daughter. Taking the book quietly from my rather tremulous hands, he said to Mrs. Whipple, rather than to me, in his rather stern manner :

“What is this girl reading, Mrs. Whipple? I hope you will take some supervision in the matter, and see that she reads proper books.”

He did not seem to expect an answer ; but, taking the book and glancing over its contents, he tore the leaves out one by one, and cast them into the blazing fire. My cheeks flushed with mortification and anger. Mrs. Whipple proceeded to take her specs deliberately from her nose, placed her needle back in her work-basket, and, withdrawing her flaring silk handkerchief from her pocket, blew her nose. I knew from these movements that she was about to make a charge in self-defence.

“Mr. Klopenstene, your daughter is an odd girl.” Here she stopped to take breath and recruit, while my father said :

“I am aware of that fact, Mrs. Whipple.”

The housekeeper re-tied her cap-strings.



"She has arrived at that mature age when a woman's character is formed ; she is quite a girl."

"True, I forget ; how old is she, Mrs. Whipple?"

That lady took off her glasses, and, having wiped them on her handkerchief, answered :

"She is fifteen to-day, sir." She looked at him with some astonishment at the question. "And it is high time she were getting an education that will fit her for her station." My father put his hand to his head, and appeared to be thinking deeply as Mrs. Whipple continued :

"You have not forgot, sir, that her mother wished her to be sent to Mrs. Osgood's school when she should be fifteen? I intended speaking of the matter before, but this is the first fitting occasion that has presented." My father turned his eyes towards me when the housekeeper mentioned my mother, and our glances met. He said—more to himself than to any one present—

"True ; she looks like her mother ; why, I had almost forgotten that the child will soon be a woman." Putting out his hand, he said kindly :

"Mattie, come here and let me look at you." I went to him with some timidity ; but when I saw two great tears gather in the corners of his eyes, and fall athwart his cheeks, I learned with what a yearning love I loved him. He smoothed the hair back from my brow ; he called me Mattie and little woman, with so much endearment in his tone, that I could not

account for the sudden change. He imprinted a kiss on my brow—the first fatherly kiss I remembered receiving for a long time back. As he folded his paper and prepared to leave the room, he said to Mrs. Whipple:

“Let her wardrobe be prepared as soon as possible, for she must go to Mrs. Osgood’s in a few days at furthest.” As he passed my chair, he stooped and kissed me again, whispering:

“Good-night, daughter.”

“Good-night, father,” I said, and throwing my arms about his neck, I burst into tears.

## CHAPTER VII.

*The Last Days at the Pines—My Father's Plan for my Future.*

"WHERE'S Mattie?" I heard my father ask the morning of the day prior to that on which I was to set out for school.

"She's out in the pines, I expect, as usual," said Mrs. Whipple, "on the rampage; she likes not to stop in-doors after daybreak."

"Poor child!" said my father, in a pitiful tone; "her home must indeed possess few attractions if she prefer the gloom of the woods."

"Why, la, sir, it's not gloomy to her; she exhausts her vocabulary in trying to set forth its attractions. I hope a few years of school-life will sober her down and change her notions a little, sir. Why, she has no more idea how to be a lady than the man of the moon. She can't sew a stitch, cook a partridge, tell when the roast is done, set a table; in fact, she can do nothing becoming a girl of her age. Why, sir, when I was fifteen, I took sole charge of my father's kitchen."

"My daughter is not to be educated for the kitchen, ma'am," said my father stiffly.

Good Mrs. Whipple gave a start as I walked into

the room, and pulled her great cap-ruffle closer over her head, with a movement that betokened surprise and consternation ; for I was a living witness to the fact that she had never tried to teach me one of the arts mentioned in her catalogue.

“ Here I am, father,” I said ; “ not a woman to be sure, but only a girl ; and if you will come with me I’ll show you and tell you why I like the pines.”

I saw that my father had his cane in his hand, and I think, from what followed during that morning walk, it was his intention to extend an invitation to me to join him. He smiled at my proposal—the first smile that I had noted on his face since my mother’s death. This was why I took his hand with so much confidence as we left the house. He might have been a little child whom I was leading, so meekly did he follow wherever I wished to go.

I took him along the little path that led to my sacred grave. I do not remember what I said, but I believe I talked incessantly about any subject that happened to excite my fancy ; at all events, it seemed to be interesting to him, for he would occasionally press my hand more firmly, and I would catch his eye sometimes fixed on me with a fond look. I told him about that night long ago when I met John Day in the graveyard. I told him of the beautiful girl I had seen laid away to rest amongst the poor outcasts. The day was one of those sweet summery ones that sometimes linger like a spirit about the death-bed of the

year. An occasional twitter amongst the branches; shining spires of golden-rod and mullein adorned the copse and headlands.

We sat for some time beneath a chestnut-tree that stood like a towering and watchful sentinel at the end of the lane, with the burrs dropping about us, and sometimes the chestnuts themselves would fall; a squirrel came out with his bushy tail, and scampered away with one in his jaws into the hollow of a neighboring pine.

So strange a thing is memory, oftentimes one cannot recall the names of those whom we once loved and called friends; and yet we remember with a wonderful distinctness the fall of a certain leaf amid the myriads of the forest; we see its shape, its delicate veins, its changing hues as distinctly as we saw them years ago. The patter of a rain-drop against the window-pane, a snow-flake on the wintry wind or falling into the river's bosom, a flower; while memory serves us in these minute things, she denies us memorials of the most solemn eras of our lives. This was to me a day of unalloyed happiness—almost the first I had known. My father seemed anxious to make me his confidante. When I had exhausted my stock of conversation, he unfolded his plans for the future.

“Come, daughter,” he said; “come with me, and I will show you what I intend to be doing during your three years’ absence.”

“Three years, father!” I said. “Surely I am not

to be gone so long. I shall want to see you, and the Pines, and home so badly."

"True, my child; but I shall come and see you sometimes; and what I am about to do for you will make home so comfortless that it will be better for you to remain away from it for a time. You will soon form new ties amongst girls of your own age, and forget all about home and your lonely father." He spoke so kindly and yet reproachfully.

"Father," I said, in a rebuking tone, while the tears came into my eyes. I was quite hurt at the idea of learning to forget one whom I had so suddenly learned to love. With his arm thrown protectingly about me, we pursued our walk in silence until gaining a fine elevation, which had gained the rather dignified title of Oak Mountain, from the fact of its being the only hill of any great height in the county, and a few fine oak-trees growing like plumes from its brow. It was a beautiful spot, and the view of the surrounding country was one of mingled picturesqueness and grandeur. My father lifted the hat from his brow as he stood gazing out at the scene and inhaling the pure and unadulterated breath of heaven.

"Here, my child, I intend building you a home; one worthy of the womanhood I hope you will one day attain."

I was somewhat surprised at this revelation.

"But the old homestead at the Pines, surely that is not to be torn down?"



"No, no, not that; but, Mattie, you will not always be a simple, unconscious girl; the time will come when another will come between your heart and mine; another will bestow his name upon you, and then I can leave you here, while I retire to my old home and spend the remainder of my days in peace and quietude."

I was pained at the idea of my ever marrying. I hated even the thought, indeed. It was a girlish resolution I had formed; but I had determined on a life of celibacy, to be one of the number denominated by shallow minds, "crusty old maids." I believe I made an attempt to answer, and stammered forth some incoherent sentences, but my father continued to point out the beauties and eligibilities of the situation, the farm-houses lying in the low lands like white doves nestling down in peaceful nests amid fields of corn and wheat. To the right, like a garden of verdure, lay his Beechdale farm, tenanted by three odd old maids; and away to the left, far beyond the pines, the great city, with its shadowy, indistinct spires glistening in the sun. It was indeed a fine prospect, and I felt it in every fibre—a sort of soul-expansion such as we experience on contemplating any fine work of art or genius, only here God was the genius that fashioned it.

Leaving Oak Mountain, we passed some laborers in a field, husking corn, I think, and soon came to a slope of rocky soil where a shaft had been sunk, and

my father informed me here was the quarry where he should get the stone for building material. It was a dark-brown and compact rock, and just suited the fancy which I had for strong, gloomy-looking houses.

When we returned again to the Pines, I found home had more ties for me than I imagined; such ties as these we never feel until they are about to be broken. I saw little of my father that day again, for he mounted his horse and rode away over to Beechdale.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*Watts's Hymns.—Going out from Home. Hoylestown Seminary.*

ONE more little walk amid the grand old pines,  
one more short lingering visit to my lonely grave.  
This is the last morning at the old home. When  
I return again a change will have come over the  
spirit of my life, a new threshold will have to be  
crossed ; I leave this old house as home for the last  
time. How glorious the crown that autumn has  
flung down upon the woods—

“ A spirit haunts the year's last hours ;  
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers,  
To himself he talks ;  
For at eventide, listening earnestly,  
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh  
In the walks ;  
Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks  
Of the mouldering flowers.  
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;  
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
Heavily hangs the tiger lily.”

The hand on the broad old Saxon dial pointed to  
the large Roman numeral—ten ; at half past, the vil-  
lage coach would be at the door.

How my heart fluttered and kept time with the great pendulum as it swung to and fro, ticking the moments away.

Mrs. Whipple came to me, and with a far-fetched sigh of genuine feeling—not for my departure, but for the loss of her favorite volume—presented me with a shabbily bound copy of Watts's Hymns. She would go about her household duties for hours singing these hymns in her antiquated voice; she seldom became angry; when she did, however, her spleen soon subsided into her favorite hymn tune:

“Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,”

or some one of the hundreds she held at her command.

I knew the pang of regret which it must have cost her to make this sacrifice for me, and I insisted that she should keep it for her own use. With a mock-sorrowful countenance she said:

“Oh, Miss, if they only do the good for you they have done for me—comforting soul and body—I shall be thankful. Many is the blessed time I have forgot all earthly sorrow in singing the songs of the Lamb, but I have enough by heart to last me until the end, which approacheth speedily, perchance.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Whipple,” said I. “I appreciate your good wishes, and hope some day to be

worthy of more of your esteem than I have been, even to the cooking of a partridge."

"Ah, child," said the good matron, blowing her nose vociferously with her flaming handkerchief, "don't remember those trifles against me; that was what made my poor dear Jeremiah leave me, never to come back any more. If thy tongue offend thee, etc. Poor Jerry! Poor Jerry!" and the house-keeper fell into a fit of weeping. This was not the first time her deceased husband, who had proved a renegade from connubial felicity during his life, had been spoken of and paraded by Mrs. Whipple. Whenever you caught her in a sad mood or with tears in her eyes, you might know that she was thinking of "poor, dear Jerry." She replaced her rumpled cap-frill and in a few moments was calm as ever.

"Don't forget that I have put some luncheon in your satchel, child, for you will be hungry enough before you get to Hoylestown."

I promised her to remember, and she left the room, returning shortly with my shawl and hat. I took advantage of her absence to examine the book which she had given me. It had evidently been well used; it was tear-stained and yellow; on the fly leaf was written, in a bold and rather masculine hand, "Nancy from Jerry," and to this was added "Martha Klopenstene from Nancy Whipple," with the following Scriptural passage beneath: "Seek

and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." My father came in shortly with rather a sad expression on his countenance—something like the old severity. I divined the cause, for in his hand he held my mother's jewel-case.

"Here, take these; keep them; they were your mother's," and with tears in his eyes he turned from me. I opened the little box, and there within was a gold watch and chain of antique pattern, a brooch and diamond ring, on the top of which was a slip of paper. On it was written, in a neat female hand: "For my daughter, to be given to her when she shall enter school."

There was no signature, but the tear that fell on the paper was a proof that my heart had written mother there. It was a strange group gathered about the door while my trunks and boxes were being lashed to the rack.

My father, who was to accompany me, was the central figure; Mrs. Whipple and Aunt Dinah, the cook, in the background. Dinah, with her neatly turbaned head, pressed her broad African nose close to the back of my hand as she strove to kiss it, and Mrs. Whipple did not stop to think of the consequences to her new and prodigious cap-frill as I threw my arms around her neck, hugging and kissing her in a girlish fashion.

"Come," said my father, and with his strong arms he lifted me into the coach. With some general

orders to Mrs. Whipple and old Peter, he followed. The driver cracked his whip in an energetic manner; a shout, the rumbling of wheels, and we soon lost sight of my dear old Pines. It was a long and tedious journey, with no scenery of more than ordinary interest to enliven the way. Hoylestown was about twenty-five miles from Haddonsfield, and I remember falling asleep with my head resting on my father's shoulder. When I awoke, two new passengers had got into the coach—an elderly lady and a slender girl of about my own age.

She was a bright, beautiful girl, with rosy cheeks, sunny curls, and such a winning smile hovering about her childlike mouth, so much soul speaking from her eyes, that I was drawn towards her by some invisible attraction. My heart stood up and said unto me, there is one worthy the right of fellowship. Our eyes met many times before we arrived at our journey's end. I was not a little surprised and disappointed when we arrived and halted in front of a long row of low two-story buildings, standing next to the village church, with a great porch running their entire length.

This, then, was Mrs. Osgood's famous seminary—a sort of machine into which you placed ignorant, unpolished girls, and after the revolution of a few years on the wheels of time, they emerge in all the glory of polished womanhood.

The young girl and elderly lady alighted with us.

The former looked so frail as she stood there in the glow of the setting sun, the wind blowing the golden curls all over her face, I thought of a sweet frail vine blown by the wind, with no support for its clinging tendrils, and I let the sweet picture steal into my heart. She blushed deeply as the elder lady, who proved to be her aunt, introduced her to Mrs. Osgood, who had come out to meet us.

"Annie Glyde"—I caught the name, and I think there is much in a name, in spite of Will Shakespeare's assertion in his *Romeo and Juliet*. It was as sweet and beautiful in its liquid sound as the girl that bore it. My father turned and said: "Excuse me; Mrs. Osgood my daughter," and imprinting a kiss hastily on my brow, he sprang into the coach which was in waiting and left me standing there alone, a stranger amongst strangers, with the tears falling slowly from my eyes.

The strange woman also took the return coach, but Annie Glyde did not weep; she stood there so mute and melancholy in her girlish beauty, that I could not help but give her a smile through my tears, which said as plainly as I could have spoken it, "Let us be friends." The sequel of our lives will prove that it was a compact that endured until eternity. Mrs. Osgood was a matronly, quiet, dignified woman, with a sparse cap, and a diminutive crape shawl drawn across her shoulders, pinned before; a smile that was somewhat affected but not



habitual, and withal a Quakeress. She gave us a warm and motherly welcome to Hoylestown Seminary, as the school was christened, and led us into a long narrow room, where about one hundred girls, aged from fourteen to twenty, were busily engaged in demolishing whatever was set before them. I cannot describe my emotions on entering this room. It looked more like a huge gormandizing machine than a young ladies' supper-room. They were all so quiet, that the click of the knives and forks sounded not unlike the clatter of mill machinery.

All eyes were turned upon us as we entered, in spite of the matron's frown. We were seated side by side in this trying moment for a timid girl, Annie Glyde and I—and from that hour our two hearts sat down to a life communion, which, if broken here below, will be renewed in eternity, beyond the pearl gates and golden portals. Oh, sweet and bright morning-star of my heart, how soon the glare and the brightness of life's full day brought thee to thy setting!

“Oh, if thou e'er hast wronged her, if thou e'er  
From those mild eyes hast caused one bitter tear  
To flow unseen—Repent, and sin no more.”

## CHAPTER IX.

*Last Days at Mrs. Osgood's—Annie Glyde and I—Womanhood.*

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Annie Glyde, as she drew the comb from my hair and let it fall in wavy folds about my shoulders. "Why do you confine such glorious hair about your head? I never look at it but I think of the mermaids and sea-nymphs, whose only mantle is their flowing, wavy tresses. Let me show you how I like to see it," and sweet Annie brushed the dark wavy tresses out into beautiful ripples upon my brow, and arranged a tableau for her own gratification before the mirror. It was not a beautiful face I saw reflected there before me. The features were irregular. My only glory was my long, thick, black hair, from which I never could brush the wave, and which sweet Annie Glyde was so fond of likening to a midnight sea, ever in motion, glistening in the moonlight. Perhaps my only beauty was my eyes; they were black and full; and the woman's pride within me whispered—there, at least, was one attraction in the shadow of the mirror.

"You are not beautiful, and yet you are beautiful to me," said Annie Glyde, as she arranged my regal crown to suit her fancy. "Now you look like a



queen, and here is your throne." She drew me towards an easy chair that was a part of our furniture in the little room at Mrs. Osgood's.

"Were I a queen, I should be as jealous as Queen Elizabeth was of Scotland's Mary, with such a bewitching creature as you mingling with my courtiers."

"But you would not treat me so cruelly and unsisterly, would you? I should fall at the foot of your throne," and she knelt on the floor before my chair, "reminding you of my former good offices, when we were schoolmates at Hoylestown together, and I know I should read forgiveness in Queen Elizabeth's good melting eyes. Do you know I can see through your eyes until I imagine I get a glimpse of your soul? They remind me of windows with curtains drawn and a room illuminated, but filled with such strange furniture and peopled by such quaint images, that I cannot for the life of me tell whether I look into a gloomy dungeon of some prison-house or on some gay and festive scene; they alternate so rapidly from gloom to sunshine, that I cannot understand you." At this strange and poetic exposition of my character, I burst into laughter.

"There it is now; a moment ago you were as dignified and stately as if you did indeed occupy a throne; now you are laughing at me and ridiculing me; I said nothing ludicrous, did I?"

Her sweet face saddened so suddenly that I pulled her towards me and kissed her. This was our last

day at school. Together we had grown up out of girlhood to women of eighteen, and if the true woman is not developed at that age, I think that all the future weight of years will never set a brighter seal upon it. For us, childhood and girlhood, the dreamy spring and summer of life, were now rolled away like a scroll into oblivion, and the waves of riper life, with their ceaseless turmoil, were to dash in restless commotion over their beautiful wrecks for ever.

Three years ago to-day, since our arrival at Mrs. Osgood's; how swiftly the time had rolled away!

Three years, day after day in monotonous routine, the *pater noster* at early morn repeated in concert by a hundred voices, then Scriptural readings, French, music, and lessons whose modern names I forget, all have vanished into the past—with the thoughts, the emotions, and the griefs of girlhood, into the past that shall not give up its dead until the great sea giveth up hers. I received two letters from the Pines yesterday. A brief and laconical one from my father, and a gossiping one signed with the broad signature of Nancy Whipple. My father's ran thus: "My Daughter.—You will prepare for home immediately on receipt of this. We are in the new house at Oak Mountain. Your schoolmate, Annie Glyde, is welcome to the Pines; bring her with you."

Mrs. Whipple's was one of greater length. I

give an extract from it. "The Lord help us, young lady, there are strange stories afloat in the neighbourhood of the Pines about a white figure that has been seen at night standing in the graveyard at the foot of the hill. The old tenement house at the lane's end has been let, notwithstanding the wide rumors of its being haunted. You know it has stood empty since your grandfather's death, many years ago. An old man, called Christopher, is your father's tenant, a strange man of whom nobody knows anything; and the Lord only knows how he can stop there o' nights, but he does stay there night and day, and nobody has seen him leave the house. I need all the strength of grace (and Watts's Hymns she should have added) to keep me from putting faith in these machinations of the evil one. How I dread these stories; they keep me awake o' nights, and last night I actually mistook my bolster for a ghost. I am afraid to go to the village alone even in broad day. To think it has come to this, I, Nancy Whipple, afraid of spirits, and I a professing disciple." Here the house-keeper broke into some admonitions about my journey, of little interest to the reader.

Her story reminded me of my own experience away back in the years, and I thought the mystery would result in the same solution. I thought little more of the matter; the strange joy that was thrilling through me was the thought of home, my fa-

ther, and the dear old Pines again. Sweet Annie Glyde was to accompany me; this thought rendered the separation from all others an easy task. My heart had not gone out towards many; I was a strong lover, but a lover of few. I thought of Oak Mountain and its new home—we had not yet named it; my father wrote me that the duty was left for me. It was on the slope of the hill, and I had long ago determined to christen it Oak Side, which would come near its original name; so henceforth in this book it will be known as Oak Side. The old haunts at the Pines had not lost all their charm for me, although I was no longer the girl that crossed the threshold of Mrs. Osgood's three years ago. During that period my maturer womanhood had roused itself and cast off the sandals of youth; yet it had not disrobed me of my girlish fancies and tastes. I was not old in heart; I felt as fresh and joyous as ever, perhaps several shades more thoughtful.

I only remember the joy that dissolved in tears as I threw myself into my father's arms, and Annie Glyde and I went away from the irksome task of studied application to lessons, out into life, to weave the threads that run through this story into our lives, and study the deeper lessons of an all-wise Teacher who has made the world his school-room, a place of preparation for the duties of eternity.

## CHAPTER X.

*Oak Side—Annie Glyde's Lover—The New Tenant in the Old House at the Pines.*

It was a grand, ancient-looking structure that my father had built for our future dwelling at Oak Side. It reminded me of those old feudal castles whose mutilated and ruined remnants still linger like historical wrinkles on the face of old England's soil. It was midsummer when Annie Glyde and I came out of the shadow of Hoylestown Seminary into the light of home, and Mrs. Whipple had every window of the house open, for she asserted that the malarious damp still clung to the walls. It was a luxurious home, but my heart sometimes yearned for the simple domestic comfort of the dear old house at the Pines. My father's health was fast failing. A dry cough attacked him in the evenings after bedtime; his frame was losing its wonted vigor. I would insist upon his consulting Drs. Thornton or Woodruff, but he resisted all my appeals.

"Father, do let me send for the doctor; you are not well; indeed you are not," and the tears would come into my eyes as he answered in that unconscious *nonchalant* manner :

“Not looking well; why, how you talk, daughter; I never felt better in my life.”

He did not know that I had heard that dread precursor of consumption, the stealthy, serpent-like rattle—a dry cough—slowly but surely gaining empire over him day by day. A few evenings later, in the dusk, my father and I were sitting in the back parlor conversing on this very subject, and I was pained to see that his sole earthly wish seemed to be my settlement in life. “For,” he said, “a woman is never happy in this world alone. God in his infinite wisdom made her as a companion for man; not merely a companion in prosperity, but a helpmate in adversity. I should never die contentedly, my daughter, unless I saw you wedded first to a man worthy of you and capable of protecting you from all the ills of life.” In vain I urged that happiness was to be attained and enjoyed in a single state.

“Was Adam happy, amid all the glory of Paradise, alone? If his happiness would have been complete without, or endangered by a companion, would not an all-wise God have denied the boon?”

I was perplexed. I folded my arms and sat very still, looking out into the darkness. My father went on:

“I promise you, my child, it is for your own good I speak thus; you shall not marry without your own free will and choice; I shall interfere only when I see your future welfare and happiness in peril.



You know my wishes now, but do not consider them binding ; if you prefer it, live alone."

He sighed deeply. With the tears flowing from my eyes at this token of his unselfish love for me, I laid my head on his bosom, he encircled me with his parental arm, and for many minutes we said not a word. The subject was never afterwards renewed ; it seemed to have dropped out of time into eternity. But it did not leave my mind for many a day. It was my trouble by day and my dream at night. I looked about me over the list of marriageable men that visited my father's house, for there were many visitors now that we had our new establishment, and I saw not one that even fancy could clothe with the dignity of a noble manhood.

So strange and incomprehensible a thing is woman's love, that, if Jupiter were to command her to select *one* out of the universe, one whom she must love, obey, and honor, I believe that the door of her heart would close against such tyranny, and she would either fall in love with an angel or a devil, in order to exert the divine right of free choice.

About this time my father was applied to by a gentleman, a friend of his, through a letter from the city, recommending an acquaintance as a tenant for the old homestead, which had stood empty and deserted since our removal to Oak Side. "There will be no one but himself, and perhaps a servant ; he is a young bachelor in poor health, and wishes some



place in the country where he may recruit his strength. You will find him an agreeable companion, but a strange sort of a man withal. His rent will be forwarded immediately on receipt of a favorable answer." Thus ran the letter, and it was signed by an intimate friend of my father's.

This letter pleased my father. He had an antipathy to seeing the old house at the Pines standing there amid its garden trees and shrubs, deserted and alone, going to decay. In fact so had I; it was the nucleus around which many and all of my early associations clustered. I loved the old spot, and I seldom rode out on my Arabian pony—an exercise of which I was always very fond, and to this day I never see a woman on a horse but a strange tingle of admiration fills me—without guiding my horse down the old red lane, which was beginning, like some deserted mart of trade, to show grassy tokens of neglected travel.

There was a delicious odor of sweet fern, and hickory, and sweet clover, about this lane, that I never noticed anywhere else. The bees loved to linger in the angles of the old fence, and the cattle loved to graze there. I was glad, then, when my father decided that the old house should be inhabited again. The closed and darkened windows would be open to the breath of summer, human footsteps once more echo throughout the deserted rooms, and my old Hibernian soldier once more open his

eyes with the glow of candlelight and a hearth fire. The honeysuckles, the sweetbriers, and the alder-bushes that made a dark fringe along the fence, would again be the scene of bird flirtations and bird courtships. It was a wet, rainy morning, that my father went out on his way to the old house at the Pines, and Annie Glyde and I were reading a quaint old play that we had discovered hidden away with some of my father's old books.

We had a fashion, perhaps peculiar to ourselves, of each assuming a character and reading the dialogue by turns. I had assumed the *rôle* of a passionate lover (for it was an old, old love tale), and she was the gentle and beautiful shepherdess that disdained my proffered wealth and title. I always took the character of wooer, and I had just come to the climax of the piece, the part where the author had exerted himself to portray the divine passion and the young lord was supposed to be on his knees at the feet of the beautiful maid, when we heard the indistinct air of one of Mrs. Whipple's hymns resounding nearer and nearer, until she finally came bustling into the room with a card in hand.

"Captain Courtenay's card; he asks for the ladies."

Sweet Annie Glyde blushed crimson all over her fair roseate cheeks at this announcement.

"Tell Captain Courtenay," said I, looking towards Annie Glyde, "that Annie will be down in a mo-

ment, but that I am engaged this morning and cannot come."

"Oh, wait, Mrs. Whipple; you *will* go down with me, won't you?" and she looked at me so provokingly pitiful, with such earnest alarm in her face.

"Nay, my beautiful shepherdess, you just now disdained me when kneeling humbly at your feet; henceforth my heart is steeled against you. Perhaps when a certain gentleman, now beneath this roof, tries the same experiment, you will not prove so obdurate."

She looked at me as if to implore my silence, and with the crimson deepening on her fair neck and cheeks, and a laughing glitter of pride in her eyes, she went down stairs alone to meet him. This was as I wished, and as it should be. I knew that Captain Courtenay only mentioned my name out of politeness, and that it was my guest that he wished to see. If there is anything despicable, it is a woman that is always thrusting herself into company where she is not congenial; and lovers, especially, never get along better than when alone. Captain Courtenay was the only son of a wealthy farmer, a neighbor of my father's, and in every way worthy of my sweet Annie Glyde. I was not a little jealous when she told me that she liked him, for I knew how a woman's liking ended. I felt that I had reason to be jealous; my title was clear to her possession; she was an orphan, and I was motherless; she was my

more than sister—mine, my counterpart. Captain Courtenay was handsome, possessed of a large share of common sense and education, and a gentleman withal; and I was somewhat pleased, therefore, to see a new proof of his wisdom in his appreciation of Annie Glyde. I knew how it would end; and after she went below I went on with my dramatic tale. The beautiful shepherdess, after refusing the proffered suit of the nobleman, fell in love with a youth of lower degree.

The story went on to show how she had given her heart unsought; and one day the youth, while hunting, came upon the beautiful and lifeless corpse of the shepherdess lying in sight of her deserted flocks; he found a trinket which he had given her at the last village fair pressed to her lips, which were white and bloodless, and this told the tale of her unrequited love. I had just finished the melancholy recital when Mrs. Whipple came into the room a second time, asking for my father.

“Who wishes to see him?” I asked; “he has gone over to the old house. Can I see the person?”

“I guess it’s the new tenant,” she said; “but he has no umbrella, and is sitting on his horse out there in the rain.”

“Why didn’t you ask him in?” asked I, sharply.

“He wouldn’t come in; he only wanted to speak to your father a moment.”

“Tell him that I am at home; I will be down at

once and ask the gentleman in. Stop," said I, as I thought of the impropriety of the act "Tell him my father has gone over to the old house at the Pines to make preparations for his arrival, and if he will ride over he will find him there."

I pushed the curtain aside to gain a view of the horse and rider without my person being seen; very unladylike to be sure, but I like to look at people when they are totally unconscious of my scrutiny; they are unmasked, and you see them often as they really are. I don't like a man that wears a holiday dress, a man that uses holiday conversation, nor a man that never smiles unless you are looking at him; such are deceitful. It was rather a sorry-looking figure for a knight or a cavalier of the olden time that I saw sitting out there in the rain. He was certainly totally unconscious that any human eye was upon him, and I think would have cared as little had he known that I was examining him with a woman's scrutiny; for he sat there in an independent, idle sort of way, heedless of the wet, slashing his whip up and down upon his horse's mane, making a mimic shower of rain-drops fall with each stroke. He looked little like an invalid. I could not see his face from my elevation; only a dark-brown, curly beard was visible beneath the brim of his hat. His figure was not athletic, but it was of a tall, graceful mould.

Mrs. Whipple came out; he lifted his hat and

poured the water from its brim while she spoke. I caught an indistinct glimpse of the face, the dark hair inclined to curl; he drew the rein, struck the horse roughly with his whip, and made the earth fly about him as he cantered away down the lawn. I turned from the window with a laugh on my lips at the ludicrous figure cut by my father's new tenant.

## CHAPTER XI.

*The Swezey Sisters—Mr. Jamieson.*

MY father did not return from the old house at the Pines (which we had now adopted from habit as its title) until quite late in the evening. I had not seen so happy an expression on his face for many a day.

“What kept you so late, father?”

“Ah, ha! Mattie, child,” said he, rubbing his hands gleefully together, “that new tenant of mine is a glorious fellow; would you believe it, he actually kept me there and made me forget the darkness with his nonsensical tongue, as we sat there for hours by the open hearth; I looked back to my youth, and thought how I had once brought your mother there in all her girlish freshness, and how we had talked of the future, our future, while gazing into the same hearth. I like him,” said the old gentleman, warmly and emphatically, “and I have invited him to dine with the party on my birthday.”

“Why, father, how could you? You know that you have already invited those three old maids, the Swezey sisters, from Beechdale; and such incompatible elements should not come in contact with your



‘glorious fellow,’ as you are pleased to call him. Then there is that queer, ludicrous Englishman, Mr. Jamieson, with his pet moustache, and no brains to make up for his lack of politeness.”

“Come, my little woman, you are severe on my friends and intended guests. My new tenant is not a fastidious man, I’ll warrant you ; none of the milk-and-water sort.”

“But, father, what is the name of your newly-fledged champion ? Who is he, what is he, that he should find in you such an early advocate ? He must agree with you in politics, I guess, father ?”

Now my dear father was a man fond of his own opinion, and he was susceptible to flattery only on this one point ; and I smiled up into his face as I brought his slippers to his easy chair.

“No, no, you sly little woman ; the subject was not mentioned, and I never thought of the matter once during the whole time. I remember one funny thing he said, however, in answer to my question why he had never married. He said that he had never loved a woman well enough to marry her, and did not think there was such a thing as pure love under heaven ; that all mortal love was alloyed with passion ; he did not think or believe that there was a separate and distinct element in our natures pure enough to divest itself of the baser instinct and love divinely and purely. What a quaint doctrine, to be sure, for a man of his years ? Depend upon it,

he has had some bitter experience in his earlier years. He cannot be more than thirty, and to say that woman has no charms for him—it's strange, very strange; why, I didn't fall in love until thirty-five! Well, my child, don't lose your precious little heart on such a cold-blooded man as this; for he's handsome with all his eccentric ideas."

"Why do you call his theory eccentric, father? Do you believe that pure, unalloyed love is felt for any one but Deity?"

"Tut, tut, child; it's heresy, all of it. Ask your father such a question! Do I believe in it? No, no, indeed; it's false from beginning to end. I think I loved your mother when I married her."

I thought the subject was an irritating one to my father, and I said:

"But these Sweezy sisters, father, couldn't you manage to invent some excuse to prevent their coming? Any other day will do just as well—they cut such a ludicrous figure and say such outlandish things, with their Quaker thee and thou as a prelude. Then their great coal-skuttle bonnets and caps that astonish even Mrs. Whipple with the dimensions of their high crowns—what will your new guest from the city think of such people?"

"I care not an iota what he thinks. I tell you he is not a man to notice such things. The Sweezys are good tenants for my Beechdale farm, and

come to time with their rents as regularly as clock-work. I respect them, and will not countenance the man that laughs at them in my presence."

"I would not have them insulted by Jamieson's caustic witticisms, is another reason why I would have desired their presence on any other day; you know they always quarrel."

"That rascal, Jamieson, has trodden on my corns several times of late. If he presumes on my hospitality so far as to pain any of my guests by his conduct, it shall be the last time he crosses my threshold, in spite of his English blood and patrimony. Why, I have seen those three old maids out in the harvest-field, before a coming storm, pitching hay with all the muscular vigor of sturdy manhood; not only that, but rather than borrow a horse of me, they have drawn the load to the barn and racked it themselves. They do not employ a hand on the place except in the busiest season; a happier and a better trio I do not know in the country; and pitching hay is an exercise that would make Mr. Jamieson's hands blister in a twinkling. Any one, my daughter, who earns the bread of life by the sweat of his brow honestly and openly before the world, is worthy of both your respect and mine."

"What you have said, sir, convinces me of my error, and changes my opinion of them entirely. Were the President and suite to honor us with their

presence on the morrow, I could not desire their absence; but for all that, you must admit that they are the oddest, most old-fashioned sort of people in existence. I can imagine women gleaning in the time of Ruth and Boaz, but for them to do field labor in this century of improved civilization grates upon the ear of refinement, and cannot fail to draw a smile from even the staid; and then I remember when I went with you the last time to your Beechdale farm, the only companions they then had were about thirty cats, of all sizes and colors; and their sole objects of affection seemed to be these same cats. They were as solicitous about them as if they had been human. Surely this taste is odd and *outré* enough to make any one smile."

"I believe that I have never related to you the history of these sisters; when you hear it, perhaps you can account for many of their apparent peculiarities. The three sisters, Tabitha, Hannah, and Jemima Sweezy, were born in England. They were the daughters of a poor peasant who emigrated to this country while they were yet children; he died on the passage out, and their mother did not long survive him. Helpless in their extreme youth, they were taken by a charitable Quaker lady by the name of Sweezy and adopted as her own children. She was a widow of some fortune, and resided on a farm in the northern part of this State;

she was an eccentric, independent woman herself, and the three girls worked hard during her lifetime, until at her death she left them quite a little fortune in household goods and farming utensils. Clinging together with that sisterly affection that now characterizes them, they came three years ago and applied for my Beechdale farm, which then needed a tenant badly. I was somewhat undecided whether women were likely to make good farmers or not, but I determined finally to try the experiment; and I am forced to say that Beechdale never had better tenants. I admire their womanly independence, and give them due credit for many redeeming qualities. My daughter, never condemn a person's eccentricities until you have heard the story of his life."

I felt that I merited the rebuke, and did not know before that these sisters held so high a place in my father's esteem; he had just finished when Annie Glyde entered the room.

"Ah, ha! Here is a maiden that believes in true love, I'll warrant you, Mattie. Whose horse was that I heard flying over the gravel just now? Eh, my lady?"

I noticed that Annie Glyde did not blush, as usual, at such an allusion; she looked pale and sad, and her eyes had that brimful, tearful expression that they had never worn of late. My father noticed it, for he said, apologetically:

“Pshaw ! What foolish creatures you girls are ; I was only joking.”

He kissed both of us (I think Annie Glyde was very nearly a daughter in his affection), and went to his rest, leaving us alone together.



## CHAPTER XII.

*Annie Glyde's Trouble—The Somnambulist.*

THE echo of my father's retreating footsteps had scarcely died away in the hall before the pent-up tears came slowly dropping one by one down the cheeks of my sweet Annie Glyde. I took my father's great arm-chair that stood before the grate, drew her down to me, and laying her head on my shoulder, she sobbed like a very child. I felt inclined to laugh at first, for I divined that some lover's quarrel was the cause of her sorrow; but after a moment's silence she lifted her face from my shoulder with such a grave expression that I could not but sympathize with the mute appeal.

"What has that great boor, Captain Courtenay, been saying or doing to you now? I am half inclined to send him away for ever, he seems to render you so unhappy."

"He *has* gone for ever now;" and again the tears leaked out on the long-fringed lashes.

"Why, you did not give him his walking papers, did you, my courageous little lady? Hurrah for so much spirit in your little breast."

"Yes I did, too," said she, poutingly; "and I



don't think he loves me either. Mattie, what do gentlemen do and say when they love you?"

Her face assumed an odd and comic expression of gravity as she asked the latter question.

"How should I know? No one has ever had the misfortune to fall in love with me yet."

"Yes, they have, too. There's that odd Englishman, Jamieson, would cut his hand off to get a lock of your hair; and Dr. Thornton, and that funny old Deacon Mudge, I believe, love you to distraction. But you seem to know everything by intuition; you can imagine what a man would or should say and do if he loves a woman."

"Well, if I were a man and loved you, *mon ange*, I would send you a bouquet of mignonette, violets, lilies of the valley, or heliotrope every morning; a bundle of *bon-bons* at noon, a *billet-doux* filled with my own poetry, with your name chiming and jingling in every other line; or Tennyson or Moore about four in the afternoon, and bring myself arrayed most fastidiously in the evening. Now, would that not win your dear little bird-heart?"

She smiled as she said:

"I know that I could fancy such a lover; but what do you think Courtenay said to-night? I haven't told you yet. He told me that he loved me as deep as the ocean or as warm as the sun; at any rate, whatever he said, it meant that he loved me very dearly, and he asked me to be his wife; but after I

had made the confession that I loved him and promised to be his, the ungrateful fellow refused point blank to come and take us on our ride to Hopkins's Mills. I repented having revealed myself so soon. I want to go fishing so badly. Isn't it provoking in him? I told him that I took it all back; that I didn't love him a single bit, and that he might stay away for ever, and I wouldn't kiss him good-night, either."

"And what did the lover say?"

"Why he laughed at me as you would at a child or the antics of a kitten—I wonder if he thinks me only a baby—and got on his horse, riding away without even stopping to ask me to forgive him and beg for a kiss the second time."

I was relieved at this revelation of the cause of her child-like sorrow, and although I was inwardly laughing at her as heartily as her lover, I pitied her, for I knew that her little innocent heart was aching. I said:

"I can tell you why he laughed. Had you not just promised to be his wife, and if this would not make him happy enough to give vent to it in laughter or some other pleasant expression, he is not worthy of my little Annie Glyde. And as for the kissing business, he need not care for the loss of one; is he not soon to have you for his altogether? Ah, me! you will soon be Glyde-ing out of my hands into his."

This miserable pun on her name had the desired effect, and my heart-broken maiden of a moment ago burst out into uncontrollable laughter that rang merry as a marriage bell. A moment after, Mrs. Whipple came in with lights, humming in her subdued manner one of Watts's Hymns, and we retired for the night. Annie Glyde and I did not sleep in the same apartment. I always had a fancy for sleeping entirely alone, no matter how dearly I may have loved and respected a friend. I could never expose the hallowed secrets of my closet to their scrutiny. Annie Glyde's chamber was next to my father's, and on the first floor in the extreme east-end of the mansion. Mine was on the second floor, and a broad flight of stairs led from the hall directly to the door. On this particular evening I went into Annie's room and left her in her usual good flow of spirits before I retired. Somehow I could not sleep. I thought of anything and everything. Things that my mind had never entertained now crowded upon it in throngs. I thought of the lonely old man—old Christopher—in the tenant-house with the haunted graveyard near; the young stranger in the old house at the Pines and his odd opinions. The hours were wearing into midnight and my eyes not yet closed; I lay gazing into the vacant darkness, my thoughts drifting between Annie Glyde and her lover. Then the stranger at the old house—in the warmth of conversation my father had forgotten to

mention his name, and I had neglected to renew the question. I must have remained a long time thus, for I was lingering on the confines of dreamy oblivion, almost lulled to forgetfulness, when I heard—what?

It wakened me in an instant, and intensely I listened to the soft and regular footfalls of some one in the long entry below. As distinct as the click of the old clock in the hall, they fell as if muffled, and now, oh, horror! one by one they ascended the stairs that led to my room door. I strove to close my eyes, but the lids would not veil them. I made an effort to rise, but my pulse had almost ceased its beating and a cold sweat stood upon my brow. I remember only once to have felt the same sensation, and that once was when I came so suddenly upon John Day in the graveyard in my girlhood.

I would have called for some one, but a gurgling sound was all I could make, and yet the steps grew nearer, until now they approached my threshold. It seemed as if all animation had forsaken me when the sharp, quick click of the latch fell upon my ear, and a figure draped in white stood in the doorway. Oh, heaven! had it rested there; but, gliding towards my bedside with that regular stealth-like tread, my breathing grew shorter and quicker, until horror seemed to have benumbed my faculties and weakened me with its intensity. With outstretched arm it came, and, immovable as stone, I waited and

watched the result. Gliding in a direct line to my bedside, the elevated hand fell upon my brow, and its very warmth, if possible, chilled me with a more superlative terror. The hand could not have remained more than a few seconds, but it seemed hours to me, when it was withdrawn, and the figure glided more rapidly away, with the same regular step, latching the door behind it. My nerves relaxed, and, overcome with excitement and horror, I fainted.

I know not how long this dreamy stupor succeeded, but I was awakened by Mrs. Whipple's entering the room with light in hand and too much frightened to speak for a moment, stating that she was afraid there was some one in the house; she had heard footsteps on the stairs, she thought. I said nothing of my thoughts, but I determined to run down to Annie Glyde's room, for I now felt confident that my nocturnal visitor was none other than herself. Now that my reason was calmer, I remembered her having told me herself of a somnambulistic tour she once made at the risk of her life in her younger years. Taking the light, I asked Mrs. Whipple to go down with me. We entered the room together, and there, in her night clothing, before her mirror, stood Annie Glyde, apparently as wide awake as either Mrs. Whipple or I. But you could see by the fixed expression of the eye, the vacancy of the blue iris, that her soul was not in

them. She had torn a bouquet that Captain Courtenay had presented to her entirely apart, and was twining a wreath for her hair. She combined the flowers as tastefully as any person awake and in the possession of every faculty would have done. She made no mistakes, but finishing it, tried its effect on her brow, hung it on the mirror-frame as if satisfied, and went back to bed again, while we stood by looking on. Mrs. Whipple, at my request, promised to keep silence, and I went up to my room without awaking her, for her breathing was now healthy and regular as an innocent child's. So my ghost, sweet Annie Glyde, was a somnambulist.



## CHAPTER XIII.

*Aunt Dinah's Fright—Old Christopher.*

WHEN I acquainted Annie Glyde with her nocturnal visit to my chamber, she could remember nothing about the matter until I showed her the wreath. She had had a dream, but so indistinct and unreal that her memory could revive nothing tangible.

“But, Mattie, don’t tell *him*; he might think me so ridiculous.”

“Why should I tell any one, child?” She seemed so like an innocent, pretty child in her blushing beauty, that I could not help bestowing the title upon her. “But, my little lady, perhaps I shall not have the opportunity, as you have banished him from the house, you know. Goethe speaks of an evil disposition of mind which often misleads us so far as to make us find a pleasure in tormenting those whom we love.”

It was assuredly unkind in me to make this light remark in allusion to her last night’s distress, and she rebuked it with a look of silent reproach that I felt to my heart’s core. A child in many things, she was a woman in some.



About this time strange stories were again afloat about a supernatural visitor that had been seen in the graveyard at the foot of the hill. I seldom visited the lonely grave I had cared for so scrupulously in childhood. I had only been there once since my return from Hoylestown, and then I found that the careful hand of John Day had kept it green, and it was the only solitary unsunken mound in the midst of the numbers that surrounded it. I had never seen the strange old man who dwelt in the tenement house, which was situated about a hundred paces further along, standing back a considerable distance from the road. The stories detailed to me by Mrs. Whipple, in her letter to me at Mrs. Osgood's, had never been revived since my return, until I remember now that one evening, about nine o'clock, we were gathered in the sitting-room—father, Annie Glyde, Mrs. Whipple, and I—when Aunt Dinah burst suddenly into the room, her turban considerably deranged, and so much consternation depicted in her countenance that we involuntarily exclaimed in concert :

“Why, Dinah, what upon earth is the matter?”

She opened her great black eyes, displayed her teeth, and I believe she actually looked a shade paler with fright in spite of her dusky complexion, as she said in a low, suppressed tone :

“I’ve seed it ! I’ve seed it !”

Mrs. Whipple’s knitting fell spasmodically from

her hands at this announcement, and the next day was resonant with her hymn tunes.

"Seen what, Aunt Dinah?" asked my father, laughing heartily, while the poor affrighted negress trembled like a leaf.

"De ghost, sir, in de graveyard. I was a comin' from de village, sir, and I hurried all of de way 'till I got to the foot ob de hill, when I 'gan to 'member de strange stories of its bein' haunted, sir. My heart was in my throat, but I said to myself: 'Now, Dinah, whar's de use bein' skeery; dere's no sperrits gwain' to harm an ole nigger-wench like you is,' and I thought I wouldn't look dat way. But, sir, I couldn't help it; my eyes didn't mind me 'tall. I looked, and dar in the light of de moon I seed it; a great white figur' standing among de graves."

The sweat gathered in great beads on her brow, her knees clung together, and she bowed down with fear, as if the apparition were still dwelling in her mind's eye. My father seemed to take it as a good joke, and laughed more heartily, as he said:

"Why didn't you speak to it, Dinah? It might have told you whence it came; though after all, perhaps, it was only one of my white heifers standing there in the woods."

Dinah was somewhat ruffled at this scepticism.

"De Lord knows I seed it wid my own eyes, and if you'll pay me what's a comin' to me, sir, I'll give up my place. It's haunted, sir; I knows it am,'

and with this declaration the frightened woman left the room. I remembered my fright years ago at the same spot, and reasoned with myself. I said :

“ Perhaps Dinah has seen a human being which would not require much color of imagination to transform into a ghost.”

I would have thought that her supposed ghost was a grave-digger, as mine proved to be, had I not known that the spot was so covered with graves that the county authorities had discontinued interments there some time back.

My father remarked that perhaps old Christopher, his isolated tenant, would know something of the matter, living so near the haunted ground.

“ He is to be one of our dinner party to-morrow, and we'll ask him. Ha, ha ! what a joke it all is ; his ghostship will be paying Oak Side a visit after a little, I expect.”

But that dinner party came and brought no old man with it. My father walked down to the little house the next day. On his return I inquired why old Christopher had not come as per invitation.

“ He is the strangest sort of man I ever met,” said my father. “ He never goes out, indeed has not been over a hundred yards from the house since he came there ; and the oddest part of it all is, he has no name, or at least gives none other than Christopher.”

"Can you imagine why he observes such a strict incognito?"

"I cannot; but deeming it a landlord's duty to know something of the character of his tenants, I once asked that odd servant of his, Jacob, what had been his master's early history, and he said: 'My master, sir, like all men in this world of sin and sorrow, has suffered some grievous misfortune in the flesh, and he is expiating it by fasting and prayer in a good Catholic manner; the Blessed Virgin only knows what it is,' and he crossed himself devoutly, as if he were afraid of having said too much."

"But, father, did you ask him about this supernatural visitor—whether he had seen any strange thing in the graveyard or not, of late?"

"I did; and he started in an astonished way as I asked the question; stammering out that he had heard nothing of it, but that Jacob, his servant, was always trembling with the fear of such visitants, because of their near proximity to the dead."

Now I was inclined to a sense of the superstitious myself at times, but never when free from the influences of a heated imagination. Reason told me that Aunt Dinah had seen a human being, and that the only cause for all the prevalent rumors about the Pines being haunted, was the visit of some poor heart-broken mourner to the grave of his dead. Mrs. Whipple had recovered somewhat from her terror, for she had resumed her usual visits to Beech-

dale farm. After one of these visits to the Sweezey sisters, one day, she said to me :

“ Speaking of old Christopher, Miss, reminds me of a circumstance ; I saw him yesterday in the graveyard, on his knees, bending over a grave, muttering something to himself that I could not understand. I was sure at first that it was the apparition.”

Now Mrs. Whipple had no sooner spoken than the truth began to dawn upon my mind. I came to the conclusion that I could perchance solve the mystery, but I kept my thoughts to myself. That old man was not kneeling at a grave without a cause. If he came by day, he was likely to come at night also ; hence the wide rumors. Again a strange elevation possessed me, a sort of Nemesis-like feeling that I cannot define. I thought of Charlotte Cleytone and her premature death. Was I to visit retribution on her destroyer ? Who knows but Heaven is making me an instrument for its appointed end. I had heard of old Christopher's peculiarities, his maniac moods of grief and distress, and, like an electric flash, something told me as distinctly as I could have read it on an open page, that old Christopher was none other than the father of Charlotte Cleytone. It was intuitive, but I was as strongly impressed of its truth as if he had revealed it himself. So deeply was I wrapped in the trance of my strange thoughts and surmises for several days, that



I did not sleep soundly at night ; I would wake up with a start, and the vision of that sweet, pale face I had seen in the rude coffin would appear before me.

I determined, if possible, to encounter the old man. I visited the lonely grave several times with the hope of meeting him there ; but many, many days passed away, and new and strange emotions filled my heart before the opportunity offered itself ; and then, oh then, how different were the feelings that prompted and impelled me to the knowledge. What a sacrificial altar would be revealed to me when the slender cord should be cut that held a curtain between Charlotte Cleytone's destroyer and my future. Upon what slender threads do life, happiness, and death depend ! What a sublime arrangement of Providence it is—this veiling out the future from mortal vision ! We float down the river of life as quietly and peacefully just above the falls, as we did when all was security and calm. No rumble of thunder, no warning flash of lightning before the storm, not even the wind murmurs it amongst the leaves ; a few bubbles on the placid surface, and our barques dash over the rocky precipice of destiny without any premonitions—our hopes shattered, our lives wrecked and scattered amid the seething waters of misfortune. A steamer is on the great ocean. There is dancing and music on board, jest and laughter, as they journey along on the

great highway of nations in thoughtless security ; when the cry of fire ! fire ! breaks on the startled ear. Without any warning, the great avenger meets them face to face and eye to eye. Just so in life we meet with consternation the revelations of the hidden hand that is moulding out our destinies behind the cloud of Omnipotence.



## CHAPTER XIV.

*Thirteen at Table—Who came to my Father's Dinner-party.*

It was a gala day at the Pines. My father's dinner-party was likely to prove a success. It was an odd coincidence that his birthday and wedding anniversary should occur on the same day. Judging from the display Dinah had made of her talents as a *cuisinier*, she had entirely forgotten, or at least ignored, the threat which she had made, to pack up bag and baggage in consequence of her late fright.

It was rather an incongruous circle grouped about my father's dining-table. First, and indeed the most distinguished in appearance of all the guests, were the Sweezey sisters, with their high-crowned caps and Quaker garb, "that eternal drab," as usual, seated in a row opposite Doctors Woodruff and Thornton, and Mr. Jamieson, the Englishman. The remaining ladies of the party were a Miss Swanson, a city belle on a visit to the Courtenays, Annie Glyde, and myself. Mrs. Whipple presided over the tea-urn at a side-table. The gentlemen present, not yet named, were Captain Courtenay, Deacon Mudge of Haddonsfield, and my father's tenant from the old

house at the Pines, who sat at the lower end of the table opposite to my father. This latter gentleman, whom I then met face to face for the first time, did not strike me as being handsome. There was a cold, almost repulsive look in his rather melancholy eyes; but when he smiled, the sunshine darted into them with a magic swiftness that seemed unaccountable. He was seemingly one of those deep, thoughtful sort of men that seldom smile; but when anything worthy of mirth touches the right chord, the imprisoned sunlight breaks out like music at night, all the sweeter for having its origin in the obscurity of darkness.

My father had called him eccentric, and I think he was sufficiently *outré* to warrant such an assertion. There was not a fashionable garment in his whole attire, and yet there was taste displayed in even the tie of his cravat. Let me see a man's cravat and the part in his hair, and I can read a volume of character. There was an abandon, a careless grace about him, that betokened much of his characteristics.

In conversation he was a soul separate and distinct from a body—he went out of himself entirely and seemed to forget his personality. It was not here I learned that this great gift was his. I should not have recognised in the dignified, quiet gentleman before me, the drenched cavalier that I had seen at my father's door; and I was somewhat star-

tled when my father introduced us in his rather abrupt manner :

“Guilderstring,” said he, “this is my daughter, Martha.”

I shall never forget the peculiar emotions that filled me on our first meeting. He stood, however, not at all abashed, as if undecided whether to take my hand or not. Seeing this, I extended it, and we were acquainted, for he took it into his with a soft, firm pressure, smiling in his peculiar way as he said :

“I am glad to meet the daughter of so worthy a father.”

I do not remember what followed, but he kept near me, and in the course of conversation we stumbled upon the subject of poetry. I remember the first sentence he uttered as we entered the dining-room.

“And there is poor, pitiable, crazy Cowper, you cannot assuredly accuse him of demeaning his gift in prating about love sick swains and lasses, Miss Klopenstene?”

“No, sir ; at the risk of being thought by you a hypochondriac, I must say the poetry of Cowper gives me, at least, more pleasure as a reader, and exalts the dignity of poetry more in my estimation than either Byron or Shakspeare ; both the latter pander their noble talents to the gratification of a sensual mind rather than an exalted morality.”

"Then you would condemn my idolized Tom Moore in your category. I know you would."

"Yes, sir ; I think the poetry of Thomas Moore, with some general exceptions, not only pernicious but in some instances actually shocking to the ear of a sensitive and pure imagination."

"May I ask who is the favored poet that occupies the exalted ideal of your mind?"

"That, sir, is a question not easily answered. I find it a difficult matter to give the laurel of poetic perfection to any individual poet. The poets of the Bible come nearest the divine perfection. But when I look about me in our modern arena at the sweet singers of our own land, my eye singles out Bryant, with his great, sublime *Thanatopsis* ; Whit-tier's eternal symphony of universal freedom ; Long-fellow's music, like silver tinkling bells ; and in the maze of competitors I am bewildered. They all have a share in my estimation. There is yet one other, though not ours by nationality, yet assuredly so by language—a sister by adoption—the sweet, angelic rhythmist, Mrs. Browning, a woman worthy of immortality."

I do not know why I spoke so warmly, but this man possessed a power of drawing me out of myself that was remarkable. I was somewhat surprised, however, at his answer.

"I have not studied the poetry of the Bible closely ; it is a book whose apparent inconsistencies

and contradictions have kept me from it, and yet it may be because I am not a Christian that I cannot reconcile them. I judge that you are a member of the church, Miss Klopenstene."

"I am not a member of the church; why did you think so?"

"You are not? Your conversation led me to infer as much; only Christians, I am told, read the Bible." He said the last words with much irony in his tone.

"Can one not be a Christian and yet not be a member of the visible church, Mr. Guilderstring?"

"I do not know that I can answer you. I am not a theologian. Indeed your conversation perplexes me."

He was silent and moody, and, I thought, for a moment abstracted more than the occasion warranted.

"Perhaps I have expressed myself too freely to one who is comparatively a stranger. Pardon me, Mr. Guilderstring."

I felt not a little wounded at the abrupt manner in which he broke the thread of our discourse, and there was perhaps a shade of anger in my tone, for he seemed to start out of his fit of reverie at the sound of my voice.

"Did I wound you, Miss Klopenstene? If so, forgive me; it was not intentional. I was thinking of my mother; she once used a similar expression."

"You did not wound me, sir; why do you ask?"

"Has a gentleman not a right to know why a lady appears irritated in his presence?"

"Did I appear so?" I asked, blushing a good deal, I guess, at my subterfuge, for I felt the hot blood rush into my cheeks, and I know something flashed out of my eyes, for he smiled as he said :

"You do indeed appear so just now."

"You are skilled in reading the emotions that sway others, sir," said I, coldly.

"I am not ; but come, now, be frank with me ; acknowledge it, you were provoked with me." He smiled so good-naturedly that I was forced to confess to myself how childish I must appear in his eyes.

"I was piqued at your manner a moment ago, sir. It is over now."

This was rather a hurried conversation, but it made an impression on me that was never effaced. It proved to me that John Guilderstring's eccentricities, if such they were, arose from causes that he could not control.

We were seated at table ; Miss Swanson was on his right and I on his left. We were silent a moment, when Miss Swanson said :

"Mr. Jamieson is discussing the merits of cabbage as an edible. Mr. Guilderstring, what is your opinion of cabbage and cabbage-heads in general?"

She laughed immoderately as she glanced over towards Mr. Jamieson, who was so busy discussing that vegetable that he failed to notice her remark. Miss



Swanson was a pretty young lady, a city belle, and a flirt; but John Guildersting did not seem to relish her remark, for he turned and addressed me in regard to something totally foreign to it.

“For my part,” said Mr. Jamieson, “I think it a plebeian dish, and no Englishman of good taste would indulge in it at any time.”

This was an unhappy remark; for the Sweezey sisters, who were countrywomen of his, had helped themselves plentifully to the slaughter, and there were bountiful remnants still remaining on their plates. Now, if there was anything that would ruffle the dignity of Jenima Sweezey, who was always spokesman for the three, it was the idea of being termed plebeian. She knew that she was sprung from the English peasantry; but she was now an American woman in every sense of the word, and the blood sprang up into her forehead as she looked at the insolent puppy who was always prating about his birth, which, unhappily, endowed him with few brains.

Straightening her cap-crown until it seemed to tower in proud independence above her head, she said:

“Henry Augustus Jamieson (I do not know how she learned his full name, for I had never heard it myself before; and often has it been a matter of wonder to me how these women learned them so soon; they always used the first name), thy parents



left out one essential when they reared thee, and that was good-breeding." She spoke with so much womanly dignity, and yet so sarcastically, that Jamieson fired up a little with anger.

"One might think you lived on sourkraut at Beechdale from the expression of your countenance, Miss Sweezey;" and Mr. Jamieson fell to twirling his moustaches with all the complacency of a saint. I shall never forget the angry flash that came into John Guilderstring's eyes at this cruel remark. My father, seeing the turn that affairs had taken, rebuked Mr. Jamieson:

"Cabbage was placed on my board, sir, to be eaten, and not for discussion. I am sorry that you have turned my dining-room into a debating arena. I am very fond of the dish myself, and if it follows that I am plebeian, perhaps one of noble extraction may prefer retiring from my plebeian presence."

Mr. Jamieson seemed to see some point to this remark, for he was sullen and silent for the remainder of the meal.

## CHAPTER XV.

*Deacon Mudge's Superstition—John Guilderstring's Confession.*

"THIRTEEN at table !" exclaimed Deacon Mudge, as he cast his eyes in a rotary way around the board. "Alas! my wife, poor Maria! died just two months after having eaten at a dinner of thirteen. This is how it came about. We went to Squire Jones's one afternoon to a huskin' party, and somehow poor dear Maria was the last one of the thirteen to come to the table; she never would believe me, but I knew that she would come to her latter end before the year was out; and sure enough she took sick of the fever and died. Poor Maria!"

The good man had been so busily engaged with the substantials of the table that he had not noticed the circumstance before, and his knife and fork fell with a click on his plate that attracted the attention of the whole company. This was the first word he had spoken since the meal commenced, and from his serious manner I imagine he supposed we were all to look at it in the same light. This same benevolent old deacon was an admixture of good sense and superstition rarely met with in our nineteenth century. I think he was of Germanic origin. I had

heard him tell his weird wild ghost stories in my girlhood until my blood fairly chilled with horror; but I was not aware of any superstitious termination connected with a dinner of thirteen.

I turned to Mr. Guilderstring. "What does he mean? What is the fatality attendant on such a circumstance? Do you know?"

He was silent a moment, and when the attention of the guests was fixed on something that the deacon was relating, he said:

"An old prejudice still exists on the pretended danger of being thirteen at table. It is believed that when such an occurrence takes place, one at least of the guests present will die within a year. It is a very foolish superstition, however, for the chances are, and in fact it is a probability, that one at least out of the thirteen would have died as an average in the course of nature. Moore mentions such a circumstance as occurring one day at Madame Catalan's, when a French Countess was sent for to remedy the grievance; and Rachel, the *tragédienne*, also gives an instance, the particulars of which I have forgotten."

"You are not superstitious, Mr. Guilderstring?"

"I am not."

"I am glad of it."

"Why?"

"Because I don't like superstition in men."

"Do you admire it in your own sex?"

"No; but in woman it is more excusable, you know, she being the weaker vessel. By the way, you ought to believe in ghosts, for we have had a real one hereabouts; it is supposed to haunt that little graveyard near the old tenement-house occupied by an old man called Christopher. You know where the lane enters the high road from the Pines?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is the spot;" and I related Aunt Dinah's story.

"Now, sir, you believe it; don't you?" said I, laughing.

"No."

"What did she see, then?"

"A heifer, perhaps, as your father suggested, or some laborer resting there in his shirt-sleeves; that is all."

"I wish we were all so sceptical as you are, here at Oak Side. I don't believe such stories, but yet I am sometimes annoyed by them; and Mrs. Whipple is worse than I am."

"Do you read Shakspeare, Miss Klopenstene?"

"No, sir, but little; and have never seen a theatrical performance. I am a novice."

"You have read Hamlet, of course?"

"Yes, with Annie Glyde; she assuming the character of Ophelia."

"Do you not think the ghost a very strange conception for a mind like Shakspeare's?"

"I believe it is, but I never thought of it before."

"Has it never struck you as being very ludicrous and inconsistent?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is the way that superstition gains ground; it is through the medium of the stage, in a great measure, that it fastens its fangs unconsciously on the minds of men. A fable, no matter how inconsistent, emanating from so great a mind, will make a truthful impression on most men."

My father arose and gave the signal for adjournment. The gentlemen remained loitering over their wine; and Annie Glyde and I accompanied the ladies to the parlor. At the request of sweet Annie, I sat down to the instrument and sang a little ballad which was a universal favorite at Oak Side. I had written the song myself, and set it to one of Mrs. Whipple's tunes, for which I had taken a fancy. It was one of those old, quaint, sad, melancholy airs that the Methodist choirs sometimes render so exquisitely. It was an air in which I could lose myself altogether and sing with the perfect abandon which I gave to my voice when a child and a wanderer amid the pines. I loved to sing it. It seemed to me I could hear the wind-harp's notes as they soughed amongst the branches. I was ecstatic. I had not finished the last verse, beginning :

"My mother, too, has joined the throng,  
And in the distance dim  
I hear her plaintive cradle-song,  
And catch my mother's hymn,"

when I felt a shadow fall between me and the window. I arose. It was Mr. Guilderstring. He did not strive to conceal a tear that sparkled in his eye.

"Very beautiful," he said, in a low tone. I was confused.

"Were you present all the time?" I asked. "I thought you were taking wine with father."

I looked around the room. It was deserted. Annie Glyde had gone out on the porch with Captain Courtenay. Miss Swanson I saw walking in the garden with Dr. Woodruff, whom she was evidently striving to entangle in her web. The Swezey sisters had joined my father, who was pointing out the peculiar advantages of some dwarf pear-trees, to their evident and unconcealed delight. We were alone.

"Your father follows the American custom, Miss Klopenstene; he does not loiter over so laborious a task as we are apt to consider eating. You spoke of wine; I do not drink wine."

"I cannot see your reason, sir. When the Creator had fashioned every green and living thing, and looked around Him pronouncing all very good, He surely took no exception to the vine."

"Assuredly not. The fruit of the grape in itself



is not intoxicating; it is only after it passes through the manipulations of human agencies that alcohol is generated in the juice and it becomes a curse to Christendom."

"If you use the term Christendom in its generic sense, in calling it a curse to the Christian community, you must remember the Christian supper at which our Lord took the wine and blessed it, partaking of it with His disciples; and on another occasion, at the marriage feast, when He turned the water into wine by a miracle."

"True; but there are circumstances where total abstinence from wine-bibbing is as much a necessity as the avoidance of deadliest poison. For me to remain at the table where wine is distributed would be as foolhardy as for me to sit for hours under the branches of the upas tree, or the deadly nightshade."

"You must have had some evil experience then, sir."

"I have, indeed, Miss Klopenstene; and your good sense will not condemn me when I acknowledge it has led me to commit follies in my earlier manhood that a lifetime of abstinence can never blot out. I feel that I but do you justice when I tell you that the man before you has been carried away from the bowl beastly intoxicated, and never awoke from his maudlin reveries but the feverish thirst again seized him, and he plunged into the same excess from which his fortitude could not shield him."



"You do yourself injustice, sir; you are surely a rigid conformist."

"I am weak, Miss Klopenstene."

"You give me an impression of a man that could conquer himself readily."

"It is a mistake; a sad, sad mistake. Oh! could I but recall the past and unravel the dark threads that are already woven into the loom of that stern weaver we call Fate. O God! and must I suffer a lifetime of misery, because of one evil committed in a thoughtless moment!"

He spoke as if soliloquizing, and a painful expression shot into his eyes as he sat still, and apparently in retrospective thought. Why does he tell me this? I queried to myself, and as I looked at the firm lines drawn about his mouth, the close compression of his lips, the veined forehead, the force of character expressed in his countenance, I grew perplexed.

Here was a mystery I could not fathom. Physically he appeared to me strong, but, by his own acknowledgment, morally he was weak. His eyelids lighted up with a grandeur of expression as he went on:

"Early education has much to do with the formation of our characters, Miss Klopenstene. The parents of youth give them the compass that guides to an exalted and true maturity. My early training was defective. I cannot picture to you the

evils I wrought in my early manhood. I brought a fond and indulgent mother in early grey hairs to the grave, and was banished from my father's house because of an indiscretion that brought disgrace to the family name. Can you pity one who has been so utterly lost to virtue, to all that is high, good, and noble? Can you pity him, Miss Klopenstene."

He bowed his head on his hand. I was not prepared for such a revelation. It seemed to me hideous, monstrous; I recoiled from his presence. He seemed to notice it; he read my thoughts, for he said directly :

"You, too, then, would shun me. Was I not frank with you? I might have said nothing, and you would at least have respected me."

"Mr. Guilderstring, I entertain as much respect for you as formerly, but this strange conversation makes me tremble; it frightens me."

I feared the man who could thus sublimely and openly submit his past life to the inspection of a stranger—a stranger I said; but there is an attraction between certain men and women when they meet for the first time that disposes of all the conventional distances that society fixes between them, and they are acquainted. It was so with John Guilderstring and me. He seemed to me more like a long-lost brother whom I had just found amongst men. I turned from him and looked out across the Pines to the glittering spires of the distant city, and

thought of the great New Jerusalem, with its spires of burnished gold eternal in the heavens, whose glorious gates I could not see, and my trembling heart grew calmer as John Guilderstring went on to tell me about his past—his blank and dreary past.

So we lingered in the summer afternoon by the open window, and as I looked out through the casement, getting a glimpse of the landscape, with its varied sunshine and shadow, so he raised the curtain from his life and I caught glimpses of light and shade, of good and bad, through the imperfect window of human language. And a pity—a strange, deep pity—brooded in my heart for the man who sat beside me.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*The War of Sweezey versus Jamieson—The Incidents of an Afternoon.*

WE were interrupted. The Sweezey sisters filed into the room after their ancient and warlike custom. It was a peculiarity of these ladies to keep in close proximity to each other, ever ready to lend assistance in case of emergency ; and after the attack of Jamieson at the dinner-table they seemed to be steeling themselves for a combat, and Jamieson seemed to be following them in the rear for the same purpose. I dreaded the renewal of his unmanly onslaught ; but he soon afterwards came over to the window where Mr. Guilderstring and I were seated, and glanced over towards the trio, as he whispered : “The three Graces.” Now, the three spinsters had drawn forth their knitting from the unfathomable depths of three green baize bags that were always suspended at their sides when visiting. With their nimble fingers in rapid motion and their straight prim faces all bent at about the same angle, they cut such a ludicrous figure as the three Graces knitting, that Mr. Jamieson’s humorous comparison completely carried me away, and I burst out into laughter. It

was very unladylike, I know ; but in spite of my being a heroine, I have done some very unladylike things. Mr. Guilderstring looked at me, but did not smile.

“Are you surprised ?” I asked.

“Not at you, but at that heartless boor that would make these, no doubt, estimable ladies the subject of ridicule.”

“I did wrong to laugh.”

“You could not resist it ; therefore you committed no offence.”

The three unconscious subjects of his ridicule soon had ample revenge, however, on the author.

Mr. Jamieson having crossed the room for some purpose, and his feet becoming entangled in Miss Jemima’s yarn, she gave him a glance of supreme and unbridled contempt as she tugged away at the end in her hands. It was strong, and his struggles for freedom only got him deeper into the entanglement, until, unconsciously treading on the ball itself, it rolled under his foot, and he fell in no very graceful position to the floor.

Miss Swanson, father, and Deacon Mudge entered the room at the critical moment, and a roar of laughter followed that put even Mr. Jamieson, with his cool *sangfroid*, to the blush.

Deacon Mudge seemed to enjoy it excessively. After having exhausted his mirth, he said :

“A very humble subject, to be sure—Mr. Jamieson

at the feet of so estimable a triune. Is he suing for pardon, Miss Jemima, that I find him in so humble a position?"

"Darn the old woman's yarn!" muttered Jamieson, uttering something to himself unheard by ears polite.

"Don't darn the yarn, sir, for it may be used to darn you some day," said the Deacon, triumphantly.

Drs. Thornton and Woodruff had evidently never settled that old dispute which did not terminate at my mother's death. They were rivals, both courting the sickly graces of the same community. Dr. Woodruff was cool and collected, as a physician always should be; Dr. Thornton was feverish and excited, as a man of physic never should be. They had been arguing, for Dr. Woodruff said, in answer to some question of the elder:

"The eclectic pursues, after all, the wisest course of physics; he is like the bee extracting honey from every plant, whether sweet or bitter."

"I presume, then," answered Dr. Thornton, with some acrimony, "to carry out your simile, you would liken our school to a spider that extracts nothing but venom from the same plants. But, my dear sir, our school is too ancient a one to be blown about like a bubble by every new-fangled idea that arises. It can bear to be scandalized."

"Some of the greatest of falsehoods are the old-



est, and the dust of time covers up a multitude of errors," answered Woodruff, calmly.

I know not to what extreme the men of physics would have carried their argument had not Mr. Jamieson suddenly discovered his tongue. I knew that he was preparing to assail somebody, for that invariable symptom of mental uneasiness, the twirling of his moustache, was a sure token that he had discovered an idea. He said, abruptly addressing Dr. Woodruff:

"Suppose my grandmother were to indulge in too much warm bread, and dyspepsia should result therefrom, would the administration of bread pills insure a cure, think you? Like cures like, you know."

"There are exceptions to all rules," said Dr. Woodruff, sarcastically. "We might as well attempt to make a wise man of a fool by administering brains."

Jamieson left the field with some chagrin at this retort, and he was so quiet and docile for the remainder of the afternoon, that no one was further annoyed by his unmeaning remarks. I only know that the conversation was participated in by all present; and in its varied and detached nature as it flew from lip to lip, it reminded me of a game I have seen, where a ball is kept constantly in motion by the players casting it from one to another as rapidly as possible, in which game John Guilder-



string and I took little part. I asked him why he did not do so.

“The charms of conversation are entirely destroyed for me,” he answered, “when a promiscuous set of characters are around me. When I have but one other besides myself, I know how to give utterance and not wound, to speak freely and meet with no rebuff. If, on the contrary, a man utters his sentiments where a number of listeners are present, will his words not often scathe unintentionally, pinch some foot whose measure he had not taken, wound some heart that he has not read, make some unseen scar smart and bleed afresh? I never feel so uncomfortable as when asked for an opinion in such a company.”

I remember not the half he said to me as we sat in that company, and yet by our two selves. I only know that the afternoon sun withdrew his rays from the window, the shadows lengthened on the lawn at Oak Side, and the bright colors of the carpet grew sombre, and at last invisible, as the twilight deepened in the room; and still he lingered, while I was not weary of listening. I remember that the guests took their leave, few and far between, until only John Guilderstring and I sat there in the darkness alone.

How unspeakably still seemed the night—the wavering of leaves in the garden, the cooing of birds, and then the soft and distant fall of the star-

light as the eyes of heaven looked in upon us. He was a new revelation of man to me ; and, as I listened to his words, my heart rose up and said unto me : " Respect him." That was all. Mrs. Whipple came in with lights. He started up abruptly.

" I must go. Good-night, Miss Klopenstene."

I gave him my hand. I heard him talking with my father a few moments in the hall, the door closed, and I watched his form as it died away in the blackness of the night.

" A fine man," my father said, as he entered.

" Certainly, a very clever man," I answered. This was my only impression ; I respected him. That was all ; and I think any sensible woman would have expressed the same opinion.

Annie Glyde came in afterwards with the sweetest fuchsia bloom

" All over the cheeks of the prettiest girl  
That ever imprisoned a roaming curl."

My father looked up from his paper.

" I wonder who has been enticing you out into the night air, my little rose-bud. Why your cheeks look like poppies. I guess Captain Courtenay's lips were painted, that they should leave so much color behind them."

" Oh, Mr. Klopenstene, you don't suppose that I would allow a gentleman to take such a liberty, do you?"

"Well, I don't know, my dear; I once took such liberties without asking, whether it was allowed or not; but come, the darkness tells no secrets, and such things will happen in the time of courtship. Go, get the cards, and you and I will have a game of euchre, while Mattie gives us some music."

This was my father's favorite family amusement, and I sometimes thought sweet Annie wearied of the game, for she was his favorite partner.

She smiled as she said: "Why did you not invite Mr. what's his name?—Mr. Goldenstring, to remain and play with you? I know he would have cut off his finger to have stayed. Wouldn't he, Mattie?" and the provoking creature looked archly up at me.

"I did extend the invitation, but Mr. Guildenstring does not play cards now; he once did, he tells me."

"What an odd creature he is, to be sure. I don't like a man unless he can sing, dance, play cards—"

"Stop, Rosy; don't you see that you are condemning somebody who does neither dance nor sing, and yet one whom I guess you love a little. What a little paradox it is!"

Annie Glyde stammered out something as she blushed still deeper in her confusion, and the game went on.

"Why you have laid a left bower on my right, you little gipsy, and all because I mentioned the

name of Captain Courtenay;" and my father seemed much amused as he watched her changing moods.

The reader must not expect an elaborate description of the many characters presented in the last few chapters at Oak Side. They only come into the book and are connected with the story by chance, and claim no right as *dramatis personæ*. These latter I have endeavored to reduce to as limited a number as possible, and although others lived, moved, and had their being on the scene of action, I have confined myself strictly to the few who had an influence directly bearing on my own life and character.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*A Jealous Love.*

Two months had rolled away, and John Guilderstring had become a universal favorite at Oak Side; even Mrs. Whipple liked him, and often came singing into his presence. If she ever rendered Watts's Hymns in your presence it was a token of regard that few were favored with. John Guilderstring was welcomed by all of us—my father liked him, and Annie Glyde loved to poke fun at him in her childish way. To me he was fast becoming a friend whose arrival was always welcome, and whose departure I always regretted. Thus things stood at Oak Side when Annie Glyde came to me one morning.

"I have gained my point at last," she said, clapping her fairy-like hands together. "I am to go to Hopkins's Mills with Harry, and you and Mr. Goldenstring (she never called him anything else now), I suppose, are to go with us. I don't mind that so much; but there is that horrid Miss Swanson; I don't like her; I really almost hate her."

This was a strong word for my little sister Annie to use, and she stamped her tiny foot firmly on the

floor as she pronounced it. I drew her down to me as usual, and said :

“Do you know why you don’t like Miss Swanson?”

“Just because I don’t; that’s all.”

“No, that is not all; although it is truly a woman’s reason. My little sister is just a little bit jealous; not too much so, perhaps, but only enough to make her interesting.”

“Well, haven’t I a right to be jealous? She is always interrupting Harry (Captain Courtenay) just when I get him interested in some pet scheme of mine. I had almost made him promise to let me ride on your pony some day, and you know I want to learn so badly, when Miss Swanson came up with some of her horrid botany and a new species of rose in her hand for Captain Courtenay to examine. I wished her in Botany Bay all the time. But Harry forgot to answer my question, and, whether he was interested or not, proceeded to dissect the rose for her with the patience of a saint. Do you know, I think that Harry likes her; for I ran away, leaving them together, and he never looked after me or even noticed my departure. It is natural he should admire her talents, I suppose; but you know I always detested botany, and persuaded Mrs. Osgood to let me give it up. Can’t you give me lessons, Mattie? I would try so hard to learn for Harry’s sake.”



The idea of the volatile little creature bending her head over such an abstruse science made me smile ; and perhaps I laughed aloud as I said :

“ I don’t believe Captain Courtenay would think half so much of you were you to lose the roses from your cheeks and the light from your eyes in learning the meaning of such words as calyx, stamens, styles, filaments, anthers, cotyledons, radicle, and so forth ; and I must confess I should be amused to hear your pretty little lips pronouncing such words as cryptogamia and the host of technicalities connected with botanical study. If your little head had a universal botany bound up in it, I hardly think he could love you more than he does now. I don’t believe that I should love you so much.”

There is a charm for some men about modest, unpretending, ignorant beauty, that attracts where the utmost polish and grace which education sometimes gives to woman would fail. Annie Glyde was like a sweet, uncultivated wild flower sprung up in the woods, its beauty of soul and its fragrance her sole attractions ; and to transplant such to the warmth of an atmosphere suited for exotics would wither and fade it for ever. To be sure, she had had all the advantages of education ; but hers was not a mind to retain anything deeper than she could understand ; she was a child-woman.

“ But I sometimes think that he tires of me. I can’t use big words out of the dictionary like Miss

Swanson. I have tried, but I always get them jumbled and mixed up, so that Harry laughs at me, and then I get confused, and he says: 'How beautiful you look now.' Just as if I cared for the compliment when he is inwardly making fun of my mistakes all the time."

"And I know would like to take you in his great strong arms and keep you there until you learned to appreciate his noble heart, with its wealth of love for you. You must not trifle with his affection too much, my little sister. I think it is Addison who says: 'Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species with the design to be each other's mutual comfort and entertainment, have in that very action bound themselves to be good-humored and agreeable, joyful, forgiving, and patient with respect to each other's frailties and imperfections to the end of their lives.'"

"I am sure I forgive him. I always forget all about it and Miss Swanson, too, as soon as he hunts me up and kisses me. But then I made a discovery to-day. You know that he wouldn't take me to the Mills some time ago when I asked him, and he went that very day to make a call with Miss Swanson; she told me so herself."

"But, my dear Annie, you must remember that Miss Swanson is his father's guest, and he is consequently obliged to extend to her all the rites of hospitality."

"Just like you, Mattie; you are so sensible, and can always see right through my smoked glass. I never have a grievance but you find some good reason for its cause. You must be very happy. I wish I was like you, Mattie."

"God made you just as you are, little sister, and just what you are. He has given you some distinguishing trait, just as He has given birds wings and fishes fins. There is a jewel in every crown, but people do not always see it; perhaps yours is beauty, for you are indeed beautiful."

"Is it all of life to be beautiful? The flowers are beautiful, but they are trodden under foot like the stubble, and are of no use in the world."

"Yes, but even the bruised flower gives forth an aroma, and thus fulfils its destiny."

"Do you believe in that horrid thing, destiny? It always makes me tremble to think of it."

"You do not understand me. I mean by destiny the purpose for which it was created. It is the destiny of birds to sing and fishes to swim. I mean by destiny the aim of life; the object for the attainment of which we live, the purpose for which we were created and designed. I do not entertain that shocking idea of a sort of predestined fate awaiting us, which we cannot avoid, do as we will."

"Can you tell me what my destiny is, Mattie?"

"As the affianced bride of Captain Courtenay, your destiny is a high one. There is no higher des-

tiny for a woman under heaven than the sacred one of marriage ; its duties are, next to Christianity, the highest a woman is called upon to fulfil."

" You frighten me ; I fear the burden is too great. I shall never make him the wife he ought to have."

" Not if you continue thus to doubt his love and falter on the threshold of wedlock. A woman can never fulfil the vows she takes at the altar unless she makes her husband a *confidante* of even her little jealousies and backslidings. He does not presume that he has caught an angel and cropped its wings that it shall not fly back into heaven again ; but he knows that his wife is only a woman with all the pretty weaknesses of her sex ; and when she comes to him and acknowledges her faults, he takes her to his bosom and loves her all the more for them. Men could not love angels, and angelic women seldom inspire love ; therefore go to Captain Courtenay and whisper all your little troubles into his listening ear, and I know the burden will lighten."

" Oh, if I only could do that ; but I can't. I feel as if it was requiring too much of me."

" I fear it is pride, Annie ; pride. There is no blacker skeleton in a household than this very pride which comes between husband and wife like a shadow on their sunshine ; and if you expect to be a happy wife, begin now and learn to humble yourself sufficiently to make away with this worse phan-

tom than jealousy, and your wedded life will prove an eternal honeymoon."

Perhaps I was severe, for the tears trickled out over the lashes, and fell one by one on my hand. But I loved her—God only knows how I loved that sweet little erring sister. I saw a shadow broadening in her horizon, and I could not let pass the opportunity to counsel her and dispel the cloud that might have grown into a storm in her later life.

Weeping on my bosom like a weary dove, tired of the life around her, perplexed with what she could not understand, she seemed to be folding her wings prior to a flight on the journey whither, like birds of passage, we haste over the river. I folded her in my arms and laid her down like a child on her couch. I smoothed the sunny hair from her brow for a few moments, and when I stooped to kiss her, she slept the innocent sleep of a babe.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Hopkins's Mills—What John Guilderstring said to me—Wait.*

THERE was a glory in the bright sunshine that fell on our little fishing party that clear summer's morning in the long ago. Annie Glyde, Miss Swanson, Captain Courtenay, and Mr. Jamieson occupied the carriage, while John Guilderstring and I were in the saddle. What a buoyant independence there is in being seated on one of nature's noblest conveyances. You fly over the earth, spurning it beneath you with a wing-like swiftness, the perfect abandon of an eagle soaring in the sunshine, ploughing the ether at will. I was a good horsewoman; I prided myself on my perfect equestrianship. My horse was full of fire and spirit as he snuffed the freshness of the morning air with distended nostrils. I felt that our enjoyment was mutual. Never ask me to get inside a carriage-box when I have so intoxicating and invigorating an alternative.

"Now for a trial of speed, Miss Klopenstene," and giving our horses a loose rein, we sped away on a smooth, gliding canter, until the carriage lessened to quite a speck as it lazily followed with its cloud of dust in the distance. For several miles we con-



tinued on at the same speed, the landscape consisting only of sombre fields, until suddenly, like magic, the green wood opened its arms to us, and we found ourselves in a shaded road, with the huge branches almost shaking hands over our heads and the blue of heaven forming a keystone to the almost perfect arch.

"Here is a dwelling fit for the fairies," said John Guilderstring.

"You will think it more fitting a Druidical ceremony, I think, when you contrast it with the charms of the pond shore," I said.

"Why do you give it so plebeian a title? That word makes one think of a haunt for ducks and geese. Why not call it a lake?"

"It is too small to claim so dignified a title; besides, custom sanctions the familiar word; the old mill that stands upon the bank gives it its name. I have never heard of a mill-lake."

"True, a mill and a pond are requisite to make a mill-pond; but my old geography definition says a lake is a body of water entirely surrounded by land. We can have small lakes as well as large ones, can we not?"

"I concede the point," I said, laughing; "and confess that lake is more poetical and falls more musically on the ear; and henceforth we will call it lake."

I think I must have blushed, for it was the first

time I had ever uttered that expressive *we* in his presence. It showed that the barrier of constraint had been broken; that henceforth John Guilderstring and I would coincide in many things. It would be no longer, I think so, or you think so; but we—you and I—think so.

We had halted beneath the trees during our conversation, and presently the party in the carriage joined us. Winding our way down along an old road almost overgrown with scattered fern and weeds, we soon reached the shore of the lake. Mr. Jamieson had provided fishing-tackle for the party and rendered himself generally useful, a very unusual thing with him. It was a picturesque spot which we had selected for our piscatorial sport. There was a little bend or crook in the bank that formed a sort of inlet, and around this the remainder of the party gathered on the green sloping banks to entice the little swimmers out of their aqueous element. John Guilderstring and I stood by and watched them. There was little opportunity for Miss Swanson to interfere with my sweet little jealous Annie to-day, for Mr. Jamieson was untiring in his devotional attentions to that young lady; and she perceiving that she was making a conquest, was silly enough to be flattered by it and to draw him on like a skilful angler. Heaven save me from the presence of a female flirt; there is not a more detestable thing under the sun; and he was foolish enough

to close his eyes to the fact that, while he was baiting hooks for her to catch fish, she was baiting a hook to entrap his empty heart.

I never before noticed so holy a light of unalloyed happiness beaming from the eyes of my sweet Annie Glyde as I noticed on this occasion. Captain Courtenay had thrown his strong, manly arm around her for support, and while he steadied her pole with one hand he baited her hook with the other. It was a beautiful picture, one that wears a bright and golden frame in my memory—the sunlight falling through the leaves and flecking the greensward; the sweet scents that strayed in and out of the woods; the low, muffled sound of falling waters as they rippled over the dam; and the confused rumbling of the mill-wheel.

It made me think of the frail flower I have sometimes seen nestling in the crevices of a great, flinty rock that shielded it for ever from the storm, to look at that frail, beautiful creature nestling in the arms of that great, strong, muscular man; and I prayed then very fervently that he might indeed take her and shield her from the storms of life for ever and ever.

“Would you like to cast in your net?” said John Guilderstring, as we stood watching the others silently.

“No, sir; I think it cruel. It makes me shudder to see the struggling, gasping little creatures drawn

so unceremoniously out of their hiding-places. I am not a disciple of Izaak Walton, I can assure you. I never fish."

"What will you do to amuse yourself, then?"

"Me! Why I am never at a loss for amusement in a place like this. I shall go gipsying."

"I shall go with you, then."

"As you please," said I, fastening my riding-skirt up into loops with pins, while he stood by watching the operation. "But perhaps I shall lead you into some inextricable path where you might not be able to find your way out."

"Would you not be with me?"

"Yes, but I should prefer not being an actor in a parody on the lost Babes in the Wood."

He did not seem to relish my answer, for he was silent. Bidding the rest of the party an adieu, and promising to return soon, we took our way along a little foot-path that led to the right along the bank. John Guilderstring parted the branches as we went along in single file, and lifted me bodily over a little marshy rivulet with his strong arms. He seemed little like an invalid that day; one moment he was cheerful and laughing with me, the next he was strangely and suddenly serious, moody, and thoughtful. We came to a sort of dam where a little boat was moored.

"Would you like to dip an oar, Miss Klopenstene?" he asked, as his eye fell on it.

“With pleasure, if it will not spoil the sport of the fishers.”

He said that it would not, and loosing the boat from its moorings, he drew it around to a shallow cove and lifted me into it. Taking the oars, he pushed away from the shore, and we glided along with almost an imperceptible motion in the shadows of the trees that lined the banks. He was a good oarsman, and the oars made scarcely a perceptible sound as they fell regularly in the water. The sensation was one of unalloyed calm to me; a sort of soothing quietude gathered in my heart and sealed my lips. We neither spoke a word for many moments, but glided along as still and smoothly as two human hearts gliding down the river of time together.

No breath of air stirred the leaves of the wild and overhanging grape-vines; no sound came to us but the rumbling wheel and falling water. John Guilders-tring was thinking. Suddenly he looked up at me in a strange, questioning sort of way—not eager, but as if examining his own heart aloud.

“Miss Klopenstene, does this not remind you of the favorite metaphor of life—the boat, the stream, and the oarsman?”

“Yes.”

“Did you ever think how many lonely barques there are on the waters of time, with but one struggling heart at the oar, with no sweet face to cheer

and no lips to beguile when the troublous surf comes beating in from eternity, as I have to-day?"

"I think a brave heart can withstand the storms of life better, with none to interfere at the helm," said I, evasively.

"Ah, Martha—Miss Klopenstene—do not misunderstand me. As we now row on the bosom of this peaceful lake, with my hands at the oar and your heart as my freight, so let us together launch out on the sea of life whose turbulent waters will dash up against our great indissoluble love in vain, and we shall row on eternally, for ever and ever, until our little boat falls over the brink of time and we meet on the sea of glass."

His face was fearfully earnest. I felt that he loved me. Did I love him? I think most women can foretell what John Guilderstring said to me then, but I was totally unprepared for such a question, and while he leaned eagerly forward watching me, I answered in a firm, low tone :

"Wait. I cannot answer you now."

"When?" asked he, in a low, deep monotone.

"When I am sure that my love for you is stronger than that of life."



## CHAPTER XIX.

*The Mill—Tennyson—An Encounter—William Hartless.*

THE little boat glided on ; the oars fell just as regularly in the strong hands ; the silence was just as unbroken, and my pulse beat no swifter because a moment ago John Guilderstring had knocked at the door of my heart and I had refused him admittance. His wooing thus far had been a strange one. He was a man that attached a great deal of meaning to a small and unobtrusive action. I think that this was one reason why I had failed to perceive that his affection for me was a stronger one than mere friendship. I do not know that he had ever spoken of love to me before our aquatic excursion. He was a sort of pantomime lover. He evidently thought, like most men of acute sensibilities, that to be much in a lady's presence, to escort her hither and thither, to press her foot as he lifted her into the saddle, to take her hand at parting, were an expressive index to his warmer feelings. To be sure, he once quoted a love scene from Tennyson's *Maud* with some fervor, and I was destined to hear more of his favorite bard.

Did I love him ? That was a question that my heart was quietly entertaining, and only time could

answer: "Wait and see." We were slowly gaining a little rustic landing-place that served as a mooring for several small craft belonging to the mills, when

"On a sudden a low breath  
Of tender air made tremble in the hedge  
The fragile bind-weed bells and briony rings ;  
And he looked up."

"It is in such scenes as this, Miss Klopenstene, where God speaks to me. I once told you that I was not a student of the Bible, but in nature I see a Being revealed that no written page could portray. It is this Being that I worship and call God. I hold my breath and hear His footsteps. I listen, and to my soul a voice finds speech."

"In nature, sir, you may indeed see God's shining face, His power and majesty ; but where, oh, where, in the wide universe can you find Christ, the beatic Redeemer of the cross?"

He was silent at my answer, and we neither broached the subject then, nor ever again. The sudden and brief interchange of thought was peculiar to us. We had become acquainted with each other's idiosyncrasies, and respected them.

The scene that burst upon us now was truly an intoxicating one in its sweet, rural simplicity. Before us, locked in the embraces of the magnificent old trees, stood the mill, with its great conical, mossy

gables, from one of which obtruded a beam. To the end of this beam was attached a rope and pulley. A farmer was busily unloading his grist, while the miller—the dusty white miller—was taking it in at an upper window. The farmer was singing some rustic country ditty that the great mill wheel nearly drowned with its drowsy, gurgling, monotonous hymn.

“Listen!” exclaimed John Guilderstring. “Do you not hear the song that the water is singing to the wheel? It was once a brook:

“‘I chatter over stony ways,  
In little sharps and trebles;  
I bubble into eddying bays,  
I babble on the pebbles.  
I chatter, chatter, as I flow  
To join the brimming river;  
For men may come, and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.’”

“It is very beautiful,” I said.

“You like Tennyson?”

“Only sometimes. I wonder if the miller has a daughter?”

“Why?”

“Because this would be such an appropriate spot for rendering that most exquisite of all productions, the Miller’s Daughter.”

“Do you know it?”

“Yes, entirely. Would you like to hear it?”

“ Yes.”

“ Let us land and go into the mill, and I’ll repeat it for you.”

We moored our little boat and entered the old mill. While the rickety machinery rattled and creaked about us, and the stones ground together with that weird, grating hum; while I caught the warm, velvety meal in my hands and watched the hurrying revolutions of the wheels whirling on in ceaseless motion, John Guilderstring repeated that sweet, sweet song, the noblest and purest laurel in the wreath of the English poet laureate. Did his magical tones deepen as he looked sadly up at me? I thought so, when he said :

“ And when I raised my eyes above,  
They met with two so full and bright—  
Such eyes! I swear to you, my love,  
That these have never lost their light.”

I had never appreciated its beauties until now. The time and place were indeed appropriate. The miller was unfortunately, however, a bachelor. How the homely description sank into my thoughts :

“ The meal-sacks on the whitened floor ;  
The dark round of the dripping wheel ;  
The very air about the door  
Made misty with the floating meal.”

I thought John Guilderstring’s voice trembled as he said :

“O will she answer, if I call?  
O would she give me vow for vow,  
Sweet Alice, if I told her all?”

We left the mill when he had finished the recital, for the day was far spent and the shadows had lengthened across the lake when we entered the boat to return to the other side. We were nearing the spot from which we started in the morning, and where we had discovered the boat.

“Halloo, there!” shouted some one on shore in a harsh, loud tone.

“Who are you?” asked John Guilderstring.

We could see no one. The person of the speaker was hidden amongst the bushes that grew thick and close on the water’s edge. A moment’s silence followed, and the voice answered:

“I am William Hartless, and that is my boat, if you please.”

I looked at John Guilderstring with unfeigned astonishment. His face grew suddenly ashy pale, and the oars fell with a splash in the water from his limp and powerless hands.

“You are sick,” I said, alarmed at his pallor.

“No, no; it is nothing; nothing, only faintness. I am not perfectly well yet.”

He made a strong effort to appear calm and unmoved, but I could feel the boat tremble under me as he shook with emotion. When we reached

the shore the man came out from among the bushes and smiled, as he said in a familiar tone:

"Why, Guilderstring, is it you? Give me your hand, old boy. My dear fellow, I am glad to see you. How in the d— did you ever come to be in these parts?"

John Guilderstring appeared to be regardless of the man's extended hand, and, assuming an air of contempt for the fellow, he offered me his arm.

"That's the way you treat your former friends, is it? Give 'em the cold shoulder. Use my boat without asking my leave, and when a fellow offers to shake hands civilly with you, treat him like a dog; eh! John Guilderstring, beware how you spit upon me. I am not a senseless worm to be trodden on at your pleasure. I am a serpent that will rise up and sting you some day; have you forgotten that I possess a secret? Beware ——"

The man would have continued had not John broken out into a fit of frenzied passion.

"Hush! you dastardly coward; say but another word, and I'll cast your senseless body into the lake."

I felt his arm shake, and I saw the blood-red flame of anger rush up into his forehead and leap out of his eyes. I was frightened. He looked fearful—terrible.

"Come away, come away, John Guilderstring,"



I said, and pulling him by the arm after me, I led him back into the path.

The man continued his gibes and mutterings long after we departed ; but I gathered nothing from them that would give me a clue to the actions of either of these men at their accidental meeting. I only remembered that that man possessed a secret, and one that John Guildenstring evidently did not care to have known. There was then a dark place in his life that he had never revealed to me. He led the way in moody and abstracted silence, until I thoughtlessly said :

“ You did not know the man, then ? ”

“ Miss Klopenstene,” answered he, with mingled pride and severity in his tone, “ never ask me what I am unable to explain to you without jeopardizing my happiness for ever. Let this day be a sealed book to both of us.”

What did he mean ? Strange words these to come from him. I did not seal the book, however, for what I had witnessed made me restless. There was something familiar in that man’s face, and his name, Hartless, I had heard it before ; strange that it should escape me. Yes, yes, it was the very name. It was the man that came with her father at the burial of Charlotte Cleytone. My heart sank within me. A shadow had fallen on my day of sunshine—doubt, suspicion, dread, a commingling of uncertainties. He was not the horseman who accom-

panied me from Oak Side in the morning—that strange, odd, and eccentric moody rider that rode with me again back in the evening.

## CHAPTER XX.

*The Fire—Doubtings—A Hound on the Track—Suspicion.*

LIFE rolled away without much incident at Oak Side for several months. Annie Glyde still occasionally wandered about the house in her nocturnal visits. Mrs. Whipple still rendered Watts's Hymns in all her original and wonted fervor; but the ghost stories had fallen into bad repute, even with Aunt Dinah, who still presided in my father's kitchen. It was drawing on to the autumnal season, yet John Guilderstring still remained as my father's tenant at the Pines. He was a frequent visitor at Oak Side. I never spoke to him again of that strange man we met at the mills, and indeed I had so far let the incident escape me as to treat him with the former cordiality of a sister towards a brother, and that was all.

It was one of those clear, chilly nights in the early autumn that I was awakened from a sound sleep by unusual sounds and bustle in the house. I arose hastily and dressed myself. Looking out of my window, I noticed the whole face of the sky lighted up by a lurid, red glare that sent back reflected rays of amber light into my very face. I was startled.

I went below and met Mrs. Whipple at the foot of the stairs.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Oh, the Lord preserve us!” she said, with chattering teeth; “the old house over at the Pines is on fire, and they’ll surely all be burned alive; the Lord have mercy on their souls,” and she sat down shaking with terror.

I did not stop to ask my heart who her “they” meant.

“Where’s my father?” I asked.

“Oh, ooo! He’s gone over to the fire, and he’ll be burnt with the rest of ’em.”

I opened the outer door and looked out across the fields; the little path was as visible in the light of the conflagration as it was in broad day. The old house on fire and its occupant in jeopardy! I was a creature of impulses. I must go. Something told me I was needed—something whispered, Go. Throwing a thick shawl about my shoulders, I stole forth into the night, and alone took my way across the fields towards the burning tenement. I did not walk. I think I ran, so swiftly did I pass over the intervening distance. It was a scene that chilled my blood, as I stood helplessly by and watched the thirsty, hungry flames devouring my childhood’s home—my old Hibernian soldier, who had battled and withstood the assault of so many years, succumbing to the yellow element at last.

His military crown fell in with a crash, gable after gable ; and at last the great, tall lightning-rod fell with a sudden plunge into the mass of burning ruins ; his bayonet gone, he was disarmed and disabled for ever. The tears came into my eyes as I thought of the desolation so ravenous a foe would leave behind him—the pitiless, merciless enemy ! Not even the huge old barns were exempt from destruction ; they, too, caught the contagious flame, and were soon converted into a mass of giant, crackling flames. I stood back in the shadow of some shrubbery and watched the movements of the crowd as they hurried hither and thither. Many had come all the way from the village, alarmed by the brilliancy of the reflection. . But why did my eyes so earnestly search that motley crowd that hovered like phantoms around an enchanted flame ? My heart answered my lips for the first time as I stood there alone in the darkness, listening to its rapid pulsations.

Why had my feet brought me out on a lonely journey in the deep, dark, lonely night ? My soul opened its secret door, and the faint streaks of a dawning passion were visible ; my love stood upon the threshold and revealed itself to me. I saw it and I trembled. My eye rested not until it fell upon John Guilderstring, and I was satisfied ; he was safe. I loved him, and my heart acknowledged it for the first time. I saw his tall, shapely figure in its manly

beauty relieved by the fiery background, and a thrill of joy sank down into my heart. I singled out but that one form moving about in his shirt-sleeves, self-collected, calm, commanding. I forgot even the love I bore my father. I forgot that he was in danger; but as I turned away from the strange scene, the door of my heart that had stood ajar, revealing its hidden secrets to me, closed again, and I was only Martha Klopenstene, and he to me was only John Guilderstring; my friend John, and nothing more. While he was endangered, I felt that my life could be freely sacrificed for his; but now that I was assured of his safety, oh, strange inconsistency, he was to me only a man ennobled and respected by me, but I thought not yet admitted beyond the threshold of my heart. I could not persuade myself that he was to me more than a brother; and, as I took my way back across the lonely heath to my father's house, I said unto my heart: "Wait; you have not proved him yet; wait yet a little longer."

I must have walked very slowly along the little winding path, for presently I heard two voices commingling in conversation, and looking back, I saw two figures in the same path apparently following me. I recognised in the light, which was still very bright, John Guilderstring and my father.

My first impulse was flight, for I felt some shame at being discovered out there in the night and alone; but



they evidently saw me, and I waited until they came up to the spot where I was. John Guilderstring was the first to recognise me, and as he spoke I thought I saw a great weight of pain in his countenance, and a shudder crept over his frame as he exclaimed : "My God ! you here, Miss Klopenstene—Martha ! The night air, with its penetrating chill, will kill you," and taking off a greatcoat that was on his shoulders, he wrapped me in its folds as tenderly as a mother would a babe. I was indeed cold and chilled, for I coughed much as I took my father's arm, leaving John to walk on alone behind us.

"My daughter, this is very indiscreet in you ; remember your mother."

Poor, dear, self-sacrificing father that he was, in chiding me he had forgotten himself entirely. I believe that on this very night he contracted the cold from which he never recovered, and I am still left to chronicle it. We walked on in silence until we gained the threshold at Oak Side, when my father said :

"Guilderstring, you are welcome to make this your home as long as you please to sojourn amongst us."

He stood hesitatingly and looked up at me with a beseeching earnestness in his face. I saw it, and interpreted it aright. Extending my hand to him I said :

"Mr. Guilderstring, you are welcome to Oak Side," and we went into the house.

My father remained up some time listening to John's recital of the incidents at the fire. Its origin was unknown ; but John Guilderstring had his suspicions of who the incendiary was, for when my father happened to leave the room, leaning over to me, he said quietly :

"I believe that William Hartless, that man I saw at the lake, was the author of this mischief."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because he came to me for money last evening, which I refused."

"Why should he commit such an act?"

"Because he hates me."

"For what reason does he hate you?"

"I cannot tell you. I cannot lie."

I said no more. There was a reserved place which he would not allow me to penetrate. He had a secret ; there was a void between us. He gave me not all of his confidence and I withheld mine ; distrust begets distrust, and we stood apart.

"Why went you out to-night at so much peril to yourself?" he asked, after a moment's silence.

"I was anxious for my father."

He looked pained at my answer.

"Was there indeed no interest taken in the welfare and safety of a humbler person to draw you a little way from home when he was imperilled?"

"I am always interested when human life is endangered," said I, slowly.

"You are not frank with me."

"And indeed, Mr. Guilderstring, you are not frank with me."

"Would to God that I could!—that I could open my heart and expose its secrets to no harsher judge than yourself, and you would then read what my tongue can never explain," exclaimed he, vehemently.

I was glad that we were interrupted by my father's entrance.

"It seems we have a little romance in real life about us, Guilderstring," said my father. "John Day tells me he has discovered that old Christopher, my tenant at the little house near the lane's end, is a prince in disguise, a nabob, or something of the sort, assuming the character of a recluse among us."

"Indeed!" said John Guilderstring. "Give us the story; it must be very entertaining."

"There is no story connected with it," said my father, "as we have not learned the sequel yet, further than that his name is not Christopher at all, but Cleytone. Yes, Cleytone; that's it."

He emphasized the name. I was seated opposite to John Guilderstring, and I saw the sudden paling of his face, as he exclaimed in a low agony:

"Cleytone! Cleytone! did you say? O God! here, and so near me, like a hound on the track!"

My father seemed surprised.

"You know him, then, Mr. Guilderstring?"

"No, no," said John, incoherently. "Merely a strange resemblance to a name I once heard in youth; that is all."

A dread certainty seized me. If that was all, why that trembling hand that he placed in mine that night—the tremulous, nervous, excited tone? Why the shaking form, and slow, weary step that I noticed?

Ah! that was not all, John Guilderstring; not all.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*The Furnace of Fire—Old Christopher at the Grave.*

DOUBT, consternation, agony, were clutching at my heart and drawing me into strange vagaries and reflections. Into what deep, dark pit of inextricable mystery was Providence plunging my fate? I was like one walking in a dream; indeed, I should not have been surprised had I been walking the silent night watches like Annie Glyde, so perplexing were the intricate mazes of thought that filled and haunted my brain, plunging me into an ocean of fathomless revery and gloom. With the same instinctive love of solitude that had drawn me towards them when a child, I went forth in the autumn afternoon to commune with the pines. They consoled me with their almost silent, subdued hymn, so grandly did they open their great verdant branches like huge arms to enfold me in their embrace of solitude, and leave me to myself. I know not what thoughts were uppermost in my mind as I walked the woodland path that afternoon. Doubt, only doubt, was the great demon that dwelt in my bosom—doubt of heaven, doubt of God, that in His infinite mercy and goodness He should let such things

take place ; while His power was so infinite that He should let the black serpent of sin creep into a world that was so beautiful, lying out in the bright sunshine of His love ; doubt of man, of all men, since my heart rose up to slander John Guilderstring, to cast a blight on his honor, his fair fame, his life.

Life seemed all bitter ; nothing but rue and worm-wood. I saw not the flowers that summer had yet left in the lap of autumn ; only the dead, withering emblems of death, the decaying leaves, the unresurrected dust.

That name my father had repeated on the evening of the fire, the previous day my mind was not long in searching it out of the book of memory ; it was the name I heard John Day repeat years ago in my girlhood. It was the name written above the rude and lonely grave of the "beautiful, but lost, lost !" These words had now a significance to me, indeed ; and my doubting heart rose up like a great Nemesis, pointing to John Guilderstring and saying : "Thou art the man." I saw the fair, white face in its rude coffin as distinctly as I had seen it when the strangers left it for its rude burial ; and the spirit of the dead and injured girl hovered near me, whispering retribution.

I sought out the lonely spot. I wandered along the silent and deserted path that was still distinctly traced through the woods, and sought the habitation of the dead. I suspected that old Christopher had

indeed a motive in living a recluse in my father's old tenement-house. The desire of a parent to be near his child, his banished, injured dead. The strange stories of the lane's end being haunted and ghosts having been seen were all explained to me at last. It was only the mortal clay, the suffering heart, the bruised affection of the father, drawing him near the grave of his lost child—a communing of life with death, of the corporeal with the spiritual. These were all conjectures. I made no one a *confidante* of the troubles that were dashing like a stormy sea over my soul. It is strange, but I never was fond of reposing confidence in any one. While others came to me and sometimes revealed the minutest details of their lives, I closed my heart against them. Annie Glyde, my father, and even staid Mrs. Whipple, made me their confessor. But, like a confessor, I never exposed my own secret and hidden thoughts.

It was drawing near to the hour of sunset, and the great shadows of the Pines made a twilight as I walked on towards the graveyard. My eyes were so blackened with the pain of intense thought and misery that I came upon the fence before I was aware of it. I climbed the railing. There stood the little mound, even now untouched by the frosts, for the flowers that crowned it were bright and beautiful as hope sitting down at the tomb. The letters were not yet effaced by the storms



of winters, and I read again the homely inscription :

CHARLOTTE CLEYTONE,  
*Buried September 10, 18— ;*  
HISTORY UNKNOWN.

It burnt itself into my memory like a red hot brand of fire. I gazed fixedly upon it as I would upon a serpent that was charming me while it prepared to sting. I could not weep. It was the first time that I had ever known a pain too sharp, too deep in its probing power to be relieved by tears. I sat there like one in a nightmare, until I was startled by the sound of approaching footsteps. I gained the other side of the fence and hid my person behind the hedge of wild brambles. The sound of crackling branches drew nearer and nearer, until presently an old man emerged from the woods at the further side, next the tenement-house. Instinct told me that it was none other than old Christopher. He soon made his appearance. With much difficulty he climbed the fence, and my heart beat with a dead, muffled slowness as I saw him approach the grave of Charlotte Cleytone. Baring his grey and venerable head as he approached, he exposed a brow and face that I had surely seen somewhere before. I could not be mistaken. Although ten years older in appearance, I recognised in that old and broken-down man, crushed with his

weight of sorrow, the stranger whom I had met years ago at the burial. The same peculiar quiver, caused by deep suffering, gathered in manifold wrinkles about the corners of his mouth. My first thought was to speak to him and ask him boldly what my heart was striving to solve. But the apparent grief, the sad expression of his calm face, were too sacred to be disturbed now.

I had heard of his fits of insanity, but I could detect nothing in his face but grief, mute and inexpressible sorrow. But Christ knows that grief and sorrow are sufficient burdens to unbalance the mind, and perhaps I learned it afterwards. I was confident now that old Christopher was none other than the father of Charlotte Cleytone, and a great soothing pity filled me for the sorrows of that miserable, heart-broken old man. My own perplexities assumed a different form. I felt that my griefs were lessened by contrast with his; that God had been lenient and good to me, while He had been severe to him. I was abashed. I turned away, leaving the old man standing where the setting sun left a halo of glory about his head, and the evening breeze lifted the white hairs from his brow, like the fingers of angels, alone with his dead. I know not now what were the sensations that I felt towards John Guildersing. I doubted him, and yet I could scarcely credit such cruel, ignominious doubts. One moment I was conscious of his guilt, and asked myself

should not I feel as Christ did when He said to the adulteress : " Go, and sin no more."

The next found me confident of his innocence, and I rose up to protect his honor against myself. As I had left my house at night, when he was in jeopardy at the fire, so now I left my doubts and protected him from the slander of my doubtful convictions. As the door of my heart had opened and revealed its secrets to me then, so now I caught a glimpse of a feeling that I could not understand, nor can I define a something that troubled me. It was not the friendship of friend for friend. It was not the affection of a sister for a brother ; it was not the pity of a pure woman for a sinful and erring man ; it was not justice struggling with unjust accusation ; it was neither of these. What was it, then ? Was it love ? Perhaps I know not. I only know that I was a helpless, struggling woman, fighting with myself, striving to find the path of duty, seeking for the sunshine in the storm, looking for the rainbow on the cloud ; but the storm beat, the rains fell, the winds blew, and demolished my beautiful structure of hope, for its foundation was not builded upon a rock, but on the sand, and it fell with a crash to the earth.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*Fleeing from Myself—The Storm and the Curse—The Accusing Finger and John Guilderstring's Confession—Old Christopher's Death.*

ANYWHERE! anywhere! to flee from my own thoughts and avoid John Guilderstring. This dread uncertainty was killing me. I kept out of his way; and he, moody and silent, I think avoided me. Did he suspect my thoughts? I think not, or he would have striven to justify himself in my eyes. Oh, heaven, can any man justify such a cruel, heartless act in the eyes of a pure woman! God forbid. Did I love him now? Yes, I fear in the midst of dread suspicions and sorrow, a great angelic love lifted its form from the chaos and struggled with duty. Human nature is prone to see something beautiful even in sin. I remembered his words in the conversation at our first meeting: "I cannot picture to you the evils I wrought in my early manhood. I brought a fond and indulgent mother in early grey hairs to the grave, and was banished from my father's house because of a disgrace I brought to the family name." I remembered the contrite tone. Did he not give me fair warning? And was this the

man I loved? I shuddered then at his words. But, O God! I did not think it was this—this foulest, blackest blot on the souls of men. I shut myself in my room and pondered over my books for hours together; my indulgent father had provided me with this means of refuge at least, and I fled like a stricken bird to cover. I strove to drown myself in the pages of thought emanating from genius. But the mind will not always be guided by our desires, and I found not the rest which I sought. It was Friday morning—a bright, beautiful, warm day. Annie Glyde and Captain Courtenay were enjoying a *tête-à-tête* on the terrace fronting the lawn. Sweet Annie, she was very happy now since Miss Swanson had left for her city home—an element that suited her best. She would come to me sometimes, for she felt that I was troubled, and, smoothing the hair from my brow with her soft, white hands, would whisper:

“I can’t be happy while you are sorrowful.”

My father came in from a short walk. He seldom left the house much now in consequence of the attendant exhaustion. He was growing weaker. I used every effort to keep him in the open air when the weather would permit.

“Come, father,” I said, on this morning, “I have some shopping to do in Haddonsfield this morning. I want you to drive me over to the village. The fresh air will do you good.”

I was glad when I heard him give the order to John Day, who was working for my father now at Oak Side. He had left his old business of grave-digging and been metamorphosed into a hostler at Oak Mountain. John Guilderstring came out as we got into the carriage. He looked ill, and I thought grieved. His eyes said to me :

“Am I not your slave ever at your service? Why not let me be your escort?”

I could not look at him long. The great change in his appearance surprised me; his pale, sickly face startled me. There was scarcely a breath of air when we set out; all was still and sultry as a mid-summer's noon. But we had not gained the edge of the woods through which the road led before quite a breeze set in, and a fleet of thin, vapory clouds floated down towards the tops of the pine-trees.

My father noticed the indications of a thunder-shower, and said we must be hasty or the storm would overtake us. We reached the village. I made my purchases hurriedly, and we were on our way back. We had just reached the wood when the lightning began to play with terrible rapidity about us, and a stroke fell on the devoted head of a giant pine, splintering and shivering it to atoms, not fifty yards from us. Our steed made good time, and the clatter of his hoofs echoed loudly through the forest in unison with the great, loud thunder-claps that made him start on like a frightened deer.



We had nearly reached the door of the tenement-house that stood at the foot of the hill, occupied by that strange *incognito*, old Christopher, when the drops fell about us large and full, something like hail.

"Go in here," said my father as he alighted, "while I go and send a covered carriage after you."

I knocked at the door once—twice—thrice; no answer came to my repeated summons. The rain was falling thicker and faster; my father had driven away; and I stood there on the threshold alone. I smothered my compunctions, and, to escape the storm and seek a shelter, I pushed open the unlocked door. I entered the room; no one was there; it was almost empty, and as I looked about me I pitied the forlorn being who dwelt here in solitude and abject misery, a recluse from all the social adjuncts that serve to make up life—happy, congenial life. I had not remained thus sitting alone with my thoughts very long before I heard the shuffling of feet in the next room. Presently the door opened and the strange old man stood before me again. He was indeed a pitiable object—old and miserable, almost childlike in his helplessness. His whole aspect was that of a man prematurely old. His hair was white as snow, and the only remnant of his departed youth was the melancholy fire that still lit up his large, black eyes. He started as he discovered a visitor, a thing I guess



of very rare occurrence with him. I bowed as he lifted his form almost erect and attempted to smile a welcome. There was a *distingué* air about his querulous attempts at politeness. Again I recognised the distracted father. It must be he. I could not be mistaken now; all my doubts vanished. The same *contour*, the voice in its tremulousness had the same tone.

“You are welcome, young lady,” he said; “be seated,” and he placed a chair for me without lifting his eyes to my face, while he drew one for himself near the opposite window.

“Miss Klopenstene, my landlord’s daughter, I believe?”

I told him yes, and explained to him the circumstances that led to my seeking a refuge from the storm beneath his roof.

“My fire is out, Miss; I am sorry for it. I have dismissed Jacob and live now entirely alone; but I am very glad that my roof affords shelter to you.”

His voice trembled as he added, in a soft, low voice, as if talking with himself:

“I once had a daughter. Yes, she was about the same age when she died. No, not when she died; when she was murdered!”

He drew a heavy sigh, and my heart leaped into my mouth at his strange words. He could not see my emotion. It was almost a twilight in the room, so heavy was the canopy of clouds that hung over the

house. I could only see the old man's face distinctly enough to mark its varied changes in the occasional glare of a lightning flash. But I saw enough; the corners of his mouth trembled in the old way, and a tear fell out of his eye on to his hand. The whole burden of my concentrated surmises and doubts rushed upon me for a moment. I forgot all else. Now was the time to tear away the veil and see the naked truth. These things impelled me onward; the impulse was irresistible; I must speak.

"Your name is not Christopher, it is Cleytone; and your child lies buried out in yonder graveyard? Tell me, oh, tell me is it not so?"

Had I foreseen the results of that question I should never have asked it. The thunder pealed louder; the flashes of light were quicker, and like great forked tongues came in at the windows, lighted up the room with a hideous glare, and went out again. I saw the old man's eyes light up with a maniacal flash as he said, in a tone peculiar to insanity:

"Who dares insult me in my own house? I never knew that name. Away, away! Oh, Lottie, Lottie, Lottie! my peace died with thee. Poor, lost child! Poor, lost child!"

He kept on in endless repetition of the last three words; his voice grew fainter and fainter, until at last he whispered them softly to himself, as if they were consoling to him. He rocked to and fro on his chair like a mother soothing an infant, hugging him-

self closely, until, suddenly lifting his eyes again, that wild, maniacal fire shot into them until they looked like burning balls of fire rolling in the sockets, as he said, in a fierce, denunciatory voice :

“Cursed ! oh, cursed for ever he who caused thee to flee from me ! May God break his heart as he has broken mine ! May no woman ever call him husband and no children rise up to bless him ! O God ! hear and grant my prayer, for vengeance is Thine !”

The blood chilled in my veins as he hissed the fierce curse through his teeth. His face flushed crimson as he spoke, and the surcharged veins on his forehead seemed filled to bursting. My heart stood still waiting. I listened for a revelation ; none came. I fell upon my knees before him, that fierce, angry old man, and a groan escaped me as I asked :

“The name of her destroyer. Tell me, oh, tell me this, and I am satisfied——”

I implored, I pleaded with him ; he heeded me not. Ignoring my presence, he went on muttering occasional fearful oaths and curses as before. I was still kneeling in my prostrate agony when I heard a deep, suppressed groan behind me. I arose and looked back ; and there stood a shadow—a mute, suffering, mortal shadow—great drops of perspiration on its brow, ghost-like and still on the threshold. It spoke not, moved not, but stood as one stunned—a human being petrified to stone !

The old man's eyes lighted up with a Satanic fire, and seemed to swell in their sockets as he stretched out his arm and pointed to the figure. A curse died unspoken on his lips; his arm fell suddenly to his side; his head dropped upon his shoulder—he was dead! The shadow assumed shape and voice. It was John Guilderstring. But not the John Guilderstring I had once known. His dress was careless; he was much older. He wiped the sweat from his brow, and stood gazing sorrowfully at me as he spoke.

“O God! this retribution is too great to be borne! Martha! Martha! Oh, turn not from me thus. Would you curse me too? You, the soul of my soul!”

I felt a keen and two-edged knife pressing on my heart; a great pity, a Christ-like pity, for that miserable, suffering man.

“John Guilderstring, I pity you and forgive you; but”—(the tears came into my eyes, a deathly sickness seized me, I grasped a chair for support—I could not go on).

“That is not all. The dream of my later life is not then broken; you do not despise me?” he said, in a hurried tone of despondent hope. “You do, then, love me even now?” He opened his arms as he went on: “I have sinned, deeply sinned; but as you hope to be forgiven, so you will forgive me. It was done in an evil hour, in the heat of early man-

hood. I knew not the baseness, the blackness of the sin. But God knows that my life has been one of penance. I have striven to wash it out. I have learned to pray. I think Christ has forgiven. Oh, Martha! Martha! come to me; come to me as my wife, and all these clouds will be buried in the eternal past!"

Did my heart struggle within me? Was the path of duty a crooked one? I know not now. My face burned with indignant, angry shame; my soul rose up like a great Nemesis, and I said, as I pointed to the stiffened corpse of old Christopher:

"Look here, John Guilderstring; wash the blood of Charlotte Cleytone from your hands; erase the black dye of guilt from your soul which has brought this old man in grey hairs and sorrow to the grave, and then ask me to be your wife."

The damp dried on his brow; his eyes darkened with pain and his lips quivered. I trembled with remorse at the suffering I had caused. A feverish rush of blood stained his forehead; he coughed, and I saw the blood-red dye on his handkerchief. He had ruptured a bloodvessel. I forget what followed on that eventful day. I only know that the carriage came at last and I was carried home sick, weary, and perplexed.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*For Ever and Evermore—Sick unto Death—Jemima Sweezey—  
A Philosophic Lover.*

I WAS sitting in the deepening twilight alone. It was the evening of the day following old Christopher's death. My father came in.

"I have seen him buried."

"Where?"

"Beside his erring daughter."

"You know it, then?"

"Yes."

"Who told you?"

"John Day related what he knew. I inferred the rest."

"Was *he* there?"

"Who?"

"John—Mr. Guilderstring?"

"Yes, and I never saw a man so strangely affected."

Should I tell my father all? No; it would be baseness to expose the sin, now that repentance was dawning in the soul of the transgressor. If by any means we master the secret of another's life, let us bury it deep in our own hearts and roll the stone of



eternal silence against the rocky door, never to be opened until the light of eternity's dawn shall resurrect all the hidden and secret things of human hearts. I had told no one, and I should never divulge it while *he* lived. I was suffering, how deeply the Reader of hearts only knows. My father noticed it.

"You look ill."

"Do I?"

"Something troubles you. Give me your confidence."

"Father! No, no, father; not to you; only to God."

I must have spoken very firmly and decidedly, for my father did not importune me; he only sat still a few moments in deeper thought, and then left the room. I sat there musing on the strange events of the last few days. I must have been ill, but I was not sensible of it. I felt no illness but the great throbbing ache at my heart; that was all. Is there no physician that can pour balm on a bruised heart? Mine was bruised almost to breaking. I was interrupted. Mrs. Whipple came into the room singing a hymn. She stopped suddenly in the midst of a line as she saw me.

"You are wanted."

"Who wants me?"

"Mr. Guilderstring is asking for you."

"Where is he?"

“In the parlor.”

“I’ll come presently.”

She went out. I waited, struggling with myself for calmness. I fought bravely, for I think I was almost emotionless when I went out of my room to go below and meet him. I heard some one pacing the floor rapidly; it was his step. I pushed open the door, and we met face to face. He stood looking at me a moment speechless. He was very white. I might have trembled beneath his piercing eye, for he was a man to fear.

“You have come, then. I thought you would not.”

“I am here because you sent for me.”

“Are we, then, to meet for the last time? Oh, Martha! Martha! you are killing me,” and the strong man sat down and sobbed in my presence. A calm and holy resolve filled me; my soul bade my lips take speech.

“John Guilderstring, do not forget your manhood; rise up like a true man, go out into the world and struggle with your destiny, remembering what you might have been, and that, but for your one error, I might have learned—”(I stopped short).

“You might have learned to love me. Don’t stop. Finish it, I implore you; and with the help of God I’ll make it my watchword, and go out to wrestle alone with myself and the world. Let me hear it from your own lips.”

My face felt hot as I said : " I might have learned to love you."

Oh, the mighty struggle even this confession cost me ; but thank God I said it, for a strange, sweet smile shot out of his eyes, and he knelt before me, catching my hand in his. He held it tight in his strong grasp. I could not have withdrawn it if I would. Looking into my eyes, he said :

" Is there no hope for the future ? Is it for ever and ever ?"

" Between us there is a great gulf fixed for ever in this world."

" Shall another take my place ? Shall another claim what I have lost ?"

I felt his grasp tighten, and a groan escaped him. I leaned forward and whispered in his ear but one word : " Never !"

He carried my hand to his lips, and I felt it wet with his tears as he pressed it there, and said :

" Mine in eternity !"

He rose up, pressed his hand tightly across his eyes, and it was over. We spoke as friends. " I leave you to-night, Miss Klopenstene."

How calmly he spoke it, he who a moment ago was a suppliant at my feet. Not more calm than was my answer :

" God be with you, Mr. Guilderstring."

His horse was in waiting. Did he kiss my fore-

head? I did not know. I only felt a great tumult in my heart. I only knew that he was going. I heard his quick steps on the walk. I looked out of the window and saw him mount, the same man that I had seen sitting out there in the rain years ago; it seemed a long ago to me. The night wind swept through his hair; the glare from the window fell on his pale face, and he was gone—gone out into the darkness from me for ever and evermore. . . . I uttered a faint cry; a death-like sickness came over me, and all was a blank. . . .

. . . . I awoke to find myself an invalid, and gentle Annie Glyde standing by my bedside like a faithful watcher, her eyes fixed eagerly on mine. I could scarcely see distinctly in the curtained light, but my soul would know that little frail angel even in the valley of the shadow.

“Annie, my sister, is it you?”

Tears of joy fell out of her eyes down on the counterpane as she said:

“I am so glad you are yourself again.”

“Why, what’s the matter? How long have I been sick?”

“Three long, long, weary weeks.”

“Don’t sigh, for they have been short weeks to me. It seems only like a dream of a night; that is all.”

“Then you are indeed better?”

“Yes.”

I made an attempt to rise, but it was now that I felt my strength had indeed deserted me. I was too weak to raise even my head.

“What a good patient nurse you have been to watch over me so long.”

She smiled, as she said: “Me! Why I have been banished from your room for days together by Dr. Woodruff and Jemima Swezey, and you know that the edicts of the latter are like the laws of the Medes and Persians. It was only for a little while to-day that I persuaded her to allow me to assume her post at your side. But I cannot blame her, since she has brought you to life again. She is a good nurse, and I almost love her for her kindness to you. I don’t believe she ever goes to sleep; she watches you as a cat would a mouse that it is expecting to return to life again every minute; but here she comes. I know her step. Now for a scolding.”

There was indeed a storm brewing in the good matron’s face as she came sailing into the room. But her Quaker cap, with its mountainous crown and extensive frilled border, reminded me more of the snowy white wings of a good spirit than anything to laugh at, and I was blessing her in my heart all the time that she was gliding over towards the bed with her noiseless step. She spoke in rather a severe tone.

“Annie, what is thee doing? I heard thee talking,

and I came to banish thee from the room. Thee may disobey me, but never infringe on the doctor's orders; he prescribed perfect silence."

"I am better now," I said, "and don't scold Annie."

"Scold her! My child, no one ever heard Jemima Sweezey scold; bless thy heart, I am glad to see thee looking rational-like again." Turning again to Annie Glyde, she said in a mild tone: "Go, go, Annie. Thee was not calculated for the sick-room; thee lacks the faculty."

I was too weak to thank this good woman then for her disinterested kindness to me, but she is enshrined in my heart as a true type of excellence. I would lie for hours during my convalescence and watch her needles as they flew in swift motion, weaving the grey yarn into form, and I wondered whether her life was as devoid of beauty as her dress, and whether she wove no brighter thread in warp and woof at the loom of life. Had she ever loved? Had no romance ever stolen into her heart, no passion ever ruffled her smooth, calm face? Was she ever angry? It is a very grey and hard rock on which no flower will take root and grow. Was there not an earthly crevice in the flint of that woman's heart? I think there must have been, and warm affections took root there, too. It might have been that nothing but rue and wormwood would have thriven there; but she was charitable. The



love of charity was the mainspring of her character, and this charity was what drew her to me ; her soft touch on my forehead, her smooth, cooling stroke on my pillow, her patience with my fault-finding, won my love and admiration. We all have friends when we are in the flush of health and in the noontide of prosperity ; but, oh, the infinite love that springs up for those who watch over our couches of pain and press our hands when the storm of adversity sweeps over the soul !

I never again laughed at the odd figure cut by the Sweezey sisters in society. To me they were ministering angels in disguise. I could see nothing *outré* in the eternal drab of their garments ; my eye penetrated beyond the veil ; I looked through into the hearts that pulsed beneath, and I saw nothing but the noble, self-sacrificing woman. What Mr. Jamieson once uttered as a joke was truly the most applicable and sensible thing I ever heard him say. They were indeed three Graces, not in form or dress, but in heart three Christian Graces. How softly on my ear fell the mellow, musical thee and thou of Jemima Sweezey ! All nurses ought to use the plain language, for it must have been the language of Eden, and it was a golden thread in this woman's discourse. There is one other who deserves more than a passing meed of praise ; it was Dr. Woodruff. Poor man, what could have so misled him as to make me wound him so sorely ? He was indefatigable in



his attentions, and perhaps called oftener than my situation as his patient warranted ; and when I was better, and even out of danger, there was no suspension in the frequency of his visits. Oh, could I only have foreseen the results then. He brought me flowers, rare flowers, hot-house roses and Japonicas, things that were scarce at such a season. He brought me new books, and sometimes pointed out particular passages for me to read. I saw no object in this, and indeed I thought he only brought them because it was a pleasure to see a patient enjoy such things. I might have had a daughterly affection for him ; but weeks sped away and I was almost well again. I think time was alleviating the sickness of my heart too. I was cheerful.

“Oh, how strange you look without your hair,” said Annie Glyde ; and it was a curious reflection in the mirror. How different from that shadow I had seen at Mrs. Osgood’s, when my locks were like Sampson’s ! Now they were short and curling over my head like a boy’s, they having been shorn during my illness. “Do you believe it ?” continued Annie Glyde. “I know that you have got a new lover. Don’t you know that you once told me you had never been so fortunate ? But you have a real live one now. Yes, indeed, for Dr. Woodruff took one of your long, wavy tresses away with him. He was very sly and lover-like about it, though he thought he was alone ; but I saw him fold the paper and put

it into his breast-pocket. Now, what do you think of that?"

This communication pained me a great deal ; but, after due reflection, I thought it best to await the results. They soon followed, for at my father's invitation, and since John Guilderstring's departure, I think he was inclined to favor the Doctor's suit. He was invited to the house one day not long after Annie Glyde's revelation to me of his lover-like demonstrations. His visits had slackened off of late, and I had hoped that he had given me up ; but no, the old gentleman was too young and energetic not to make a persevering suit, and after many attempts to meet me alone, we at last met accidentally in the garden. He was too much a man of the world to be at all embarrassed at our meeting or to pay the slightest regard to my silence. I tried in vain to show him that I knew what was about to follow. He talked of many things foreign to the subject altogether, to which I answered in monosyllables. Finally, he plucked a rose from the path-side. I saw him tear the leaves one by one out of its heart, and then looking up at me, he spoke :

"Miss Martha, I am old, to be sure, for so young a wife ; but if you'll come and preside at my table, I'll grow younger. I know I shall."

What could I say ? I felt mortified, but duty came to my aid.

"Dr. Woodruff, I have too much respect for you

to treat you rudely and your proposal slightly ; but I shall never marry. I am wedded to a single life. I shall live an old maid."

He said not another word ; he has often visited me since, and I respect him, but I never saw him look so quizzical and merry as he did when we parted, and he rode away in his little gig on that afternoon when I refused him. He was a philosopher.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

*The Diary and Letters—Charlotte Cleystone's Fall—John Guilderstring's Sin—Annie Glyde's Wedding.*

MONTHS rolled away. Autumn had slipped off its shining garments of gold and crimson into the sere nakedness of winter. The snows had fallen and melted again; the dull, leaden clouds had rolled away; the skeletonized trees had pulsed with a new vigor and budded out in resurrected beauty. It was spring, the birth-season of young hopes and delightful fancies, the threshold of the year across which we look into the far future and build air-castles along the track of life. I had thrown off the gloom of old memories, and was strong again in the possession of health and renewed energy. I again went forth amid the old Pines to wander with some of the pleasure with which I had haunted them when a girl. And my two graves, were they not mine; were they not the graves of my life, my love? I sometimes stood over them, but I was calm, strangely calm, in my contemplation.

The old tenement-house, with its little garden of stunted shrubs and scattered flowers, had stood untouched since old Christopher's death. Not even

its furniture had been removed ; but now that John Day had taken unto himself a wife and desired to become its tenant, it became necessary to renovate it and prepare for the new occupant. It was a duty which my father took upon himself to superintend, and at my request he permitted me to accompany him.

The dust had gathered thickly on the scattered furniture, the windows were encrusted with mud, and the spider had pitched his gossamer tent on the walls. The principal apartment wore much the same aspect that it did on that memorable morning of old Christopher's death. His empty chair stood almost in the same position, and only the cobwebs that had gathered on the rounds told how long its occupant had been absent. We went into an adjoining room ; here was a narrow bed, a chair, and a small table, with a partially consumed tallow candle as its only ornament. In one corner stood a large trunk covered with untanned skin, and closely studded with brass-headed nails ; it was unlocked, and my father opened it. Its contents were limited. There was nothing at all in it but a small bundle of letters and an unfinished diary. The letters were addressed in a female hand to "Charles Cleytone, Esq., H—— City ;" and on comparison, I found that the handwriting corresponded with that of the diary. On the fly-leaf of the latter was written in a neat, feminine hand, "Charlotte Cleytone : " there was a

date, and that was all. My heart burned within me as I thought of what might be its contents. I took them home. I felt that they were mine—my legacy. This girl, who had been so intimately connected with me and my life, had I not a right to know something of her past?

Shall I tell you what I read there while the tears flowed in great blots down on the pages? The heart-burnings, the unwise love, the repentance, the sorrow, the poverty, the misery, and beggary of the poor outcast? Then the needle, a woman's refuge in poverty; nights of toil; a dying babe, the fruit of illicit love; sickness; the county poor-house; when death, like a spirit of mercy, took her home.

It was many days before I was able to break the seal of the packet of letters after reading of the cruel fate of poor Charlotte. Many of them were sealed; they had evidently never been opened by the father, to whom they were addressed. Oh, the record of these pages was enough to melt a heart of stone. Yet there was no reproach of that father who had shut her out of his heart—his heart of wounded pride—because of her sin. She reproached only herself, and drew sunny pictures of what their past life had been; the pleasant home where she was the only child—beautiful, virtuous, and the light of the household; how she used to listen for her father's step on the walk at night when he came home from labor, and hang around his neck for his evening benediction—a kiss; of



what might have been, had not the serpent of temptation entered the household, and she loved not too well but unwisely. Alas! shall I lift the curtain from the scene that followed, so dark in contrast with this? Nay! God forbid. He alone can ever know of the horror to which the poor, ruined, deluded creature awoke. Her father drove her from his door. Her betrayer fled, and left her to her fate. No answer came to her letters, written in pain and sorrow, and blotted all over with tears of anguish. She went out alone to linger a little while in her misery and die.

And now let me draw an eternal veil of silence over the story of this poor girl's misfortune; it is enough that you see some of the results of John Guilderstring's Sin. She was poor and pretty; he was rich and proud. Her punishment (O God, was it just?) was infamy, suffering, ignominy, death! His punishment—O people, O world—was his punishment just and righteous? He went out to mingle again with virtue and beauty. No blot on his escutcheon, no stain on his character, no tongue of slander to hiss the damnable echo of guilt into his ear. She!—she hid her face for very shame; and you, O cruel world—you, while you looked leniently on him, the strong man, shut the weaker, frailer creature, the erring girl, out of your great heart, and stamped her with the scarlet letter of shame for ever! Was this just, think you?

Oh, woman! it rests with thee to correct this flagrant evil of society. Men "sow their wild oats" sometimes in youth, and a lenient eye glosses it over with the hypocritical phrase: "He'll reform, and make a good man yet." Will this Satanic excuse restore the ruin that men often bring into happy homes and quiet firesides? Let every true woman shun the man that has ever—no matter how early in life—so far forgotten himself, his God, and the respect due her sex, as to commit so enormous a sin. Is such a man fit to take thy pure, unsullied hand, and vow at God's holy altar to walk with thee uprightly throughout life and eternity? Be still, and let thine heart answer thee.

But I must resume the thread of my story. I am so old-fashioned as to be in favor of long courtships. A man should never link his fate with any woman until he has thoroughly made himself master of her character, her little whims, her moods, her eccentricities, and learned how to govern her and his temper. For these things will all crop out luxuriantly after marriage, and then it is too late, for men seldom have the patience with the wife that they have with the maid. They suddenly learn to their mortification that they are not congenial after all; that the cheerful smile and winning disposition of the maid were worn like a holiday dress; they had not pierced the fretful humor and the melancholy mood that constitute the homely garb of

every-day life—the unromantic realities that rise up to meet them at every turn in connubial life. Therefore I was pleased that Captain Courtenay's courtship had been one of "sweetness long drawn out." I think he knew the disposition of the woman he was about to marry. A long courtship is the surest test of a man's enduring love for a woman; and I did not learn until later how unfathomable and sublime was that man's love for my sweet Annie Glyde. That she loved him I know. He was her idol. She worshipped him as few people worship God. He was her strong tower. Perhaps she sinned in loving too much; she fled to him like a weary bird from the storm, seeking shelter in the cleft of a great rock. It is better to love too much than too little. I was glad that her wedding-day was fixed; it was a pleasure to me to watch her childlike delight in the preparations that were made for the event. Her only relative, her annt, the same woman that had deposited her at the door of Mrs. Osgood's seminary on that autumn morning when my father left me there alone, was staying with us at Oak Side. She was a worldly-minded woman, and took much pleasure in the thought that this burden was about to be taken from her and given into the keeping of so wealthy a husband. Alas! for her hard heart. Oh, that the burden were mine; that I could have taken her for ever into my arms and carried her through life. A hundred times had I wished that

God had given her to me as my own sister. How I should have cherished her! but perhaps I should have loved her with a love too near that which is due alone to one—God.

## CHAPTER XXV.

*The Doubting Bride—An Accidental Wound—The Walking Dreamer—Marriage and Death—Alone.*

It was the night prior to the wedding-day. Annie Glyde and I sat alone together in a chamber. I was not a little downcast at the thought that this would be our last meeting before she would become a part of that one that marriage makes of twain. She looked sadly up at me as she said :

“I am so sorry to leave you. Do you think that *he* will always love me as he does now ?”

“I think that he will,” I answered solemnly.

“But he does not know what a childish thing I am ; and to be *his* wife—oh, Martha, I’m afraid.”

“Afraid of what ?”

“Afraid that I shall not suit him ; that he will tire of me ; and then, oh then, I should die if he ceased to love me.”

“Cease to love you, child ! Why, he would die for you.”

“But will it always be so ?” she asked, with sorrow in her tone. “Will he always humor me as he does now ? If he should cross me too much, I should be very unhappy and want to come back to you.”

I smiled at her childish doubts and perplexities ; and, like an April sky, the clouds fell from her face, the sunshine burst out in her eyes, and her silvery laughter proved how transient and evanescent was her doubt.

“But how strange it is that poor little trifling me should be the first to go ; that the pebble should be picked up while the glittering, lustrous diamond is passed unheeded by. Do you know I have often thought that you would make Captain Courtenay the best wife after all ?”

“Why ?” I asked, amused at her innocent manner of speaking about her own thoughts.

“Because you are just such a woman as I have heard him talk about so much. You are so noble and womanly. I wish I were a man and single, and your hand would soon wear a ring, I know. How strange it is that you have never married !” she added, abruptly.

“Why is it strange ?” I asked, with a pain at my heart.

“Because you would make such a good wife ; and, indeed, I once thought and hoped that you and Mr. Golden——”

“Stop ! stop !” I cried, passionately. “You are hurting me.”

“What have I done ?” she asked, in a pitiful tone.

“Nothing. It is over now. Only never speak of that man to me again. I shall never marry. I shall live an old maid.”



I was silent for some time with my thoughts, but she was soon on the *qui-vive*. Her bridal outfit was spread on the bed, and snatching up the veil, she arranged it on my brow. She knew not that this act was as painful to me as her thoughtless words.

"What a beautiful bride you would make!" she said, as she drew back and surveyed me.

Alas! how could I but revert to the "might have been." That I never should wear it as a bride now I was certain. I know that the hot tears fell thick and fast from my eyes as I folded her to my bosom that night before we parted. Our intimate sisterhood was no longer to remain unbroken; another was to intrude upon it, and take her away from me for ever. I thought that her busy and excited brain would not allow her to sleep much that night, and I determined to sit up and watch over her. I drew a great comfortable rocking-chair out from one corner of the room and ensconced myself with it at the bedside. She placed her soft little hand in mine, and even while I watched her sweet face, with its flitting smiles, the fringed lashes began to droop on her cheeks, and at last the snowy lids hid the beauty of her eyes; she was asleep. I sat for several hours thus, strange thoughts occupying my mind, and at last fell into a dreamy sleep. I was dreaming an indistinct sort of dream. I must have been half awake, I think, when the consciousness of a moving presence in the room awoke me. The light

was burning dimly and low as I had left it, but I missed the little hand from mine. I looked over towards the mirror, and there stood Annie Glyde like a sleeping pantomime. She had placed her bridal veil on her brow and bent her arm on the table which supported her elbow. Her head was pressed in her hand, and the tears were rolling slowly one by one from her eyes. I spoke to her: "Annie! Annie!" but she made no answer. I knew that the old spell was upon her, and gently leading her back to bed again, I awoke her from her somnambulistic stupor. An intellectual light dawned slowly in the glazed and stony eyes, and she started as she recognised me.

"Mattie, is it you? How glad I am that you awoke me. I had such a strange and vivid dream. Mattie, do you believe in dreams?"

"What an odd question! If we were to believe in dreams, they would prophesy some very strange things sometimes. Of course I do not. Why do you ask it?"

"Because I had such a peculiar one just now. I thought that I had been married a year to Harry, and that somehow or other I was dead, and yet I looked up at him out of my coffin, and saw him crying over me; and you were there looking at me, too, and consoling him. It frightens me."

She did indeed tremble as I took both her hands into mine and chafed them.

"Why, you are as foolish as old Deacon Mudge was about thirteen at table, to be afraid of a dream. You are excited, and your imagination gets the better of you sometimes; that is all. Come, now, lie down and go to sleep."

"I can't sleep any more. I know I can't."

And she did not; the grey light of dawn stole in at the chamber window before she slept. I sat and watched her; she was going out from me to-day. I was to give her away—she whom I loved with more than a sister's love. Tears and prayers were all I could give her now. She need never come to my roof for shelter or spring into my arms as a refuge. She was going out with one who was strong and able to shield her from all evil. This satisfied my heart somewhat; but oh, I was not prepared for the solemn oath that took her away from me for ever and ever, sealing her as another's henceforth. Could she creep up to him and whisper with confidence in his ear her little petty griefs, the doubts and perplexities that she confided to me, and meet a willing listener, a ready consoler? I feared not, and yet some men possess this tender tact that is peculiar to woman; perhaps it was his.

I remember the beautiful vision of her angelic face beneath the orange flowers, framed in its cloudy veil; the tremor of her sweet, low voice as she gave her scarcely audible response; the smile of the bride-

groom as he carried her down the aisle of the village church, and out of the door leaning on his strong arm. I kissed her ; she waved her handkerchief from the carriage window, and they were gone.

. . . . .

It is strangely curious how in this life the most solemn events follow the happiest. To be sure, there were premonitions, but I was not prepared for it yet. "Oh, no ; not yet, not yet."

My father ceased altogether to leave the house ; next he was confined to his chair ; and finally to his bed, from which he arose no more until he went out across the threshold for ever.

Again did I learn how broad and deep was the heart of Jemima Swezey and her Quaker sisters ; they surely will be rewarded somewhere in God's economy ; if not here, hereafter. They were unceasing in acts of kindness to my poor sick, suffering father, and cheered me out of many a despondent mood. Dr. Woodruff, too, good man that he was, came as regularly and perhaps as often as when my own life was endangered. Dr. Thornton was again summoned to a consultation, but no human power could close the open and waiting portal of death.

While we stood about his bed, looking down from the brink of this life into the vast, unfathomable depths of eternity, his spirit went out from us—the clay-cold tenement all that remained. I remember

the busy but quiet preparations for his burial ; how they

“ Trod about noiselessly,  
Breathless and still,  
He lieth so listlessly,  
Stern and so chill.”

I remember how I stood weeping at the coffin-head until Deacon Mudge, with a gentle force, pushed me away. I heard the creaking of the screws, the dull, muffled sound of the clods as they fell on the hollow dwelling. We left him beyond the village churchyard's rusty hinge, where a few months before I had given away my bride-sister. When I came out from that grave I felt the bitterness. I was alone.

“ Alone !—Nay, not alone with thee,  
Father ; if my Gethsemane  
Be like that where the agony stirred His great soul  
To drink the bitter cup. Oh, school me to control  
And say amen.”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Annie Glyde's Honeymoon—My Cousin Lucy—Mrs. Whipple finds a Lover—What True Love is.*

LIFE at Oak Side settled down into its old routine again. But there were two faces missing—my dear father's familiar step and Annie Glyde's sweet face. My good father had willed all his wealth to me, and I was indeed mistress of a goodly heritage. John Day became my man of business, and under his supervision everything prospered as it had during my father's lifetime. But amid it all I was not happy. Was I ungrateful? No. But I felt a restlessness, a desire to rise up out of my indolence and work. Was there not a destiny of higher import for me to fulfil? I felt there was, but I could only sit still and wait for the moving of the waters of Providence.

I felt lonely this morning, and wandered out across the fields to the charred and blackened ruins of the old house at the Pines. It was an emblem perhaps of my own heart. I might have wept as I stood gazing at the dust and ashes scattered over the garden walks; but when I returned to Oak Side a letter had come from Annie—Annie Glyde no longer now. Its first words conveyed the keenest sensation of delight

and satisfaction to my heart that I have felt for many a day.

“MY DEAR SISTER :

“I am so happy.” (This was enough ; I cared not to read any further. She was happy, and I sat still and wept for joy over the glad tidings. After a little I read on.) “I wonder if I am too happy. I have learned to love my noble husband so much and so strong, that all doubt has vanished, and I only fear that something unforeseen will separate us. I cannot tell you the half that has taken place since we started on our trip. It has been nothing but a continual panorama of dissolving views, in which I saw only one delight, and that was the consciousness that I was with *him*. We—we looked at everything together. His arm supported me, and his words assured me. I wonder if our lives will always be thus made up of an eternal honeymoon? I hear his step. He is whistling for me as he would for a bird, and I—I must fly away to him, and ask you to forgive this short letter. Dear, dear Mattie—sister—I hope we will soon be with you again, and then I can tell you all. I am such a poor letter-writer. Good bye. He is getting impatient. I must go to him ; and sign for the first time and to you, my dearest earthly friend, my new name. How odd it will sound to you.

“Your Sister,

“ANNIE COURTENAY.”



I know she felt some pride in writing that name for the first time ; God bless her, and forgive me if a pang, a keen, jealous pang, shot down into my heart and rankled there for a moment, while I wept over it. It was a pride I should never share. Was I to blame for the pain that lay at the bottom of my heart when I thought of her happiness and my misery ? I don't know.

I felt lonely that night when I thought of what was before me. I had but two relatives near me—my uncle and cousin. My uncle was a merchant in H——, and my cousin Lucy was his only daughter. She was older now. I remembered her girlish face as I saw it at my mother's funeral ; for some reason they had never visited us since. I wrote to my uncle, begging him to let me have Lucy ; she was motherless. I would be an elder sister to her. Let her come and remain with me at Oak Side. I was so lonely. I was surprised somewhat at his answer. He was very grateful to me for the kind offer, and would willingly accept my proposal. So, in a few days Lucy came, with her brown curly head and ripe cherry lips. I do not think she was beautiful, but there was a nameless grace about her motions, a certain poise of the coquettish head, that charmed one. It was some time before I was able to overcome her shyness and form a just estimate of her character ; but I soon found that she was warm-hearted, confiding, and affectionate.

I learned to love Cousin Lucy, not as I loved my sweet Annie, but with a love that sprang from our relationship and her amiable qualities. I was no longer without a companion. I taught her how to ride, and, mounting our ponies, we would take trips over the country together, until the carnation on her cheeks deepened into the scarlet flush resulting from healthful exercise. We visited my Beechdale farm, and inspected the innumerable tribe of cats belonging to the Sweezey sisters. We went into Jemima's vegetable garden, and saw the products resulting from the culture of her own hands. We visited her dairy, her orchard, and her barns. We went one day to the yillage, the next to Hopkins's Mills. We rambled through the Pines until we looked more like aboriginal gipsies than civilized members of Christian society. I enjoyed it, and Lucy was in her element. She had never known what it was to be free before. She was like a young eagle that had been fastened up within the bars of her city cage, until now she tasted the pure breath of physical liberty for the first time. Living alone with her father, she had grown prematurely old in her habits, and did not dream that youth was the season for sunshine and laughter. But you would not have known her now. She had learned to laugh; and so contagious was her musical voice, that I was often cheered out of my moods and obliged to join with her.

One great source of fun for her, and an outlet for her mischief, was the courtship that had apparently sprung up between Mrs. Whipple and Mr. Jamieson. Who would have imagined that two such opposites should be attracted by one another? Marriage knows no rule. There are marriages of convenience as well as love. I think Mr. Jamieson's was to be one of the former, his sole object being to obtain a good housekeeper; she was a paragon, and his aim was to rob me of the services of mine.

Mrs. Whipple saw nothing in his attentions but what flattered vanity taught her to believe was due to her personal charms. She sang more frequently and fervently of late, and I absolutely heard her break forth into a song one morning after Mr. Jamieson had left. Lucy came in with her face radiating all over with mischief.

"I know he's been popping," she said.

"Popping what?" I asked. "Corn?"

"No, indeed; the question—that thing so much dreaded by timid men and so welcome to silly women."

"How do you know? One might think that you were old in experience."

"Didn't I see his smiling face as he got on his horse? And didn't Mrs. Whipple sing a song for the first time in her life as soon as she was left alone? These are pretty sure indications, I guess."

"What did she sing? One of Watts's Hymns?"

"Oh, it might have been a hymn-tune—but it was surely worded like a love song. I heard her sing very softly to herself this line :

" ' Oh, false love is fickle, but my love is true.' "

"I sincerely hope that it is ; but I cannot but think Mr. Jamieson's only motive to be the securing of a housekeeper."

"Well," answered Lucy, with some spirit, " what is any woman but a housekeeper, after all ? Before marriage she is an angel—sweet, dear, love, duck ; during the honeymoon she is a wife ; and afterwards subsides into her natural, or at least her usual position—a housekeeper." With a sort of mock gravity she went on : " Love is all nonsense ; I don't believe in it. If an eligible man offered himself, if he were rich, handsome, and agreeable, I'd take up with him at once, and leave love for those who profess sentiment. I am too matter-of-fact for love."

"Wait and see. Your time has not come yet. Every mature woman, no matter how rich or how poor, how high or how low, how ugly or how beautiful she may be, has seen the time of love—has passed through a season of passion—has conquered or been vanquished—has an angel or a grave in her heart."

"Why, cousin, how warmly you speak. I do sometimes think that I have an ideal ; but it is only a creature of the imagination, which, if it were

embodied in corporeal shape, I could fall down and worship with a sort of admiration, which, after all, I guess is love."

"To love is much more than to admire. It is to love your own self in the personality of another—just as you see your own image reflected in the iris of another's eye. It is to feel two pulses beating in your own heart. It is a separate second life, distinct from breathing and volition. The angels love."

"None but the angels?"

"None so purely and divinely."

Mrs. Whipple came in, and Lucy, who had grown into favor with that lady, asked her, serio-comically, whether she remembered "poor, dear Jerry?" The question was so irrelevant and saucy that I could not resist a smile, and when Mrs. Whipple went out, I asked her why she had done it? She might have wounded. She looked roguishly up at me as she answered:

"I only sought to show you, by an example, how much there is in such nonsensical stuff as love. Now, here is Mrs. Whipple, who was always talking and lamenting about her 'poor, dear Jerry,' has suddenly forgotten him altogether and taken up with old Jamieson. Do you call that love? I don't believe in it; no, indeed. I shall never marry for love."

"Wait and see," I said, as I went out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*A Family Secret—The River of Death Flows between Two Hearts—My Little Charge.*

A YEAR ago since Annie Glyde was married. This is the same month. It was just when the violets were fringing the copse and the daisies sprinkling the meadows; about the time when spring was slipping off her mantle of verdure into the bloom of early summer. The morning seems like the memory of a beautiful dream, with the hazy vapors hanging like incense over the lowlands, and the purple-tinted clouds lying out on the hill-tops, where the sun is walking up the slope of the sky. God is displaying His art on the blue canvas; only He could pencil aught so beautiful. I sit by the open window and quaff the air like rich wine from the goblet of the morning; my soul steals out of its dwelling and looks through mine eyes. God's world is very beautiful.

Hark! I heard the sound of wheels and hoofs. And surely that is a carriage driving at such a furious rate along the road; and now it turns and approaches the house. What can it mean? It draws nearer. I recognise Captain Courtenay. It is some



time since Annie has been to see me. Dr. Woodruff had told me of a secret—a family secret I cannot tell you. The last time I saw her she was roseate with health and happiness, hanging on her husband's arm. But the carriage is at the door. He looked very pale as he rushed up the steps; he whom I had learned to look upon as a brother since he had married my Annie. He did not wait for ceremony, but pushing open the door, he stood before me. The blood fled from my face as I noted his blanched cheek, his agitated manner.

"For God's sake tell me what's the matter?" I said.

He came over to me, and placing his trembling hand on my shoulder, said, in a low, hollow voice:

"Come, quick; she is dying!"

I asked no more questions. Did I not know by the instinct of love who "she" meant? My darling, my love, Annie Glyde dying! I hurried into the carriage, and we drove very rapidly over the old road. The beautiful morning freshness had lost all its charms for me now. I saw only the sweet face contorted with pain and suffering. I felt and heard only the beating of his great heart as the shadow of the coming event fell upon it.

We went into the house—the great, grand, old rambling mansion, with its high stone steps. I met Dr. Woodruff.

"She is asking for you," he said.



How swiftly my feet fled to meet her ! I entered the room, and there, pale, calm, and beautiful as ever, lay the form of Annie Courtenay, her golden hair thrown like a halo in scattered profusion about her shapely head—her little white hands clasped on her bosom. She lifted her arms as she saw me, and throwing them about my neck, pulled me down to her and held me close.

“I shall die,” she said, positively and resignedly. “Have you forgotten my dream? But I leave a charge for you,” and she pointed to a little roseate creature, wrapped in a warm covering by her side. “Take care of her, will you promise me? Be a mother to her. I give her to you; she is yours. You will teach her to be like yourself—good and noble; and some day she will rise up and bless you; and if we know aught of earthly love in heaven, I shall come to you from my home and commune with you. Come to me now and kiss me.”

I pressed my lips long and fervently to hers. Looking back, I saw Captain Courtenay standing in the door. His face was full of suffering as he watched us through his tears. I drew away from the bed; he came over and bent his face so low on the pillow beside hers that I could not see it. His hair mingled with hers; her white hands were clasped about his neck. They whispered so low that only the angels could hear. She sighed like a weary child preparing for slumber. He clasped her tightly

to his bosom, and held her there close in his great, strong embrace, as if he would keep her from death. A long and holy silence followed, during which I went out of the room and left them there together—those two parting hearts—alone.

God only knows what must have been the weight of pain when those two hearts were torn asunder. This, indeed, was love this side of heaven. He was a strong man, but at last I saw his weakness, his great unconquerable love. I heard a groan, a deep agonizing cry. I dared not open the door; all was again still. I looked through the aperture, for it stood ajar. His form was prostrate on the bed, and he was sobbing like a child. I could not look. I waited, and presently I heard a slow, heavy step; he came out. He was very white and sorrowful-looking.

“It is over,” was all that he said, and bowing his head, he sat mute and still as stone.

I went into the chamber. Dr. Woodruff had returned, and he was closing the eyes of the corpse—those beautiful eyes, closing them for ever.

“Stop!” I said; “let that be done by me alone.” I stood and looked into the soulless depths. I shuddered at the thought of the absent spirit; but was it not away up with the angels? She lay just as he (her husband) had left her—her hands fallen beside her, her hair somewhat displaced, a smile in her face and a tear in the corner of her eye. I

performed the last office; I laid the white cover over the beautiful face, and went out weeping and heart-broken. I took her child—my child now. Oh, how my heart yearned towards it; it was flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone! I felt the sanctity of the work that was given me to do; this was indeed a high calling—the education of a soul for life or death. I carried the little charge out to him (its father). He sat in the same listless attitude. He did not notice me until a faint cry started him out of his gloomy reverie. Taking it in his arms, he kissed it.

“It is all that is left of her now. Annie—call her Annie,” and from that day she has borne no other name.

I took them with me—the babe and nurse—over to Oak Side into the new house that had never echoed with the cry of a new-born babe.

Sweet Annie Glyde, they took her out and laid her near my father. I shed many tears on that day; but, oh, there was a keener grief than any tear could express. I felt a void in life without her, and if any but the angels had robbed me of her I should never have said: “It is well.” But her poor, miserable husband, was there a cure for grief like his? I saw his form bent with agony over the gaping grave, and almost forgot my own sorrow in contemplating his. It seemed as if he could not believe that she was gone. Again and again he looked down into

the dark cavern, and not until the head-stone was set and the mound fashioned into form did he desert the spot; and then with a palsied step that frightened me. I feared the result of such a godlike grief.

He went home, but the old house had no longer its charm; he left it, and went out to mingle with the gayer world.

I heard from him sometimes during the years; he wrote to me about his little Annie, and as soon as the little prattler could speak his name, I wrote back the tidings to him. Then came a present from Paris—a tiny little necklace and amulets of gold set with small diamonds. To the necklace was attached a locket, and in it a picture. He said she must learn to know him. I showed it to her, and the little creature shouted: “Papa, papa.”

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Three Years after—The Proposal—Cousin Lucy's Lover.*

THREE years had gone—swift sands from the hour-glass of life. I was beginning to feel older. My glass told me that the freshness of youth was no longer mine. Little Annie Courtenay, with her childish prattle, had grown into my heart like moss green and verdant on a ruin. My Cousin Lucy was again with me to spend another summer. I was glad of this, for her presence was a consolation and a refuge from the *ennui* that surrounded life at Oak Side.

It was a warm, sultry day in the early summer; we had gone out on to the porch to get a breath of cooler air. We were so busily engaged in watching the playful freaks and antics of the little girl, that we had failed to notice the approach of a stranger, until suddenly looking up, a gentleman stood before us. He did not wait long, but catching up little Annie in his arms, he pressed her to his heart as he showered kisses on her face. She struggled hard to free herself, but he held her in his strong arms, and said, with a smile :

“Don’t you know papa?”

She looked at him a moment bewildered, and then

instinctively nestled her little sunny head down on his shoulder. It was Captain Courtenay, but so changed that I should not have recognised him had I met him under any other circumstances. His face was shaded by a long, curling beard, and he looked many years older.

"Am I so changed, Miss Klopenstene?" he asked, after a warm greeting from me.

"You are indeed, sir. I should not have known you."

"I would have known you," he said. "You do not look a day older than when we last met."

I smiled. "Perhaps you have learned the fashionable art of flattery during your sojourn in Paris, Captain Courtenay?"

He did not like my answer.

"I have not learned to tell a fashionable falsehood, Miss Klopenstene."

Lucy carried little Annie into the house, and we sat a long time out there in the summer noon talking over the past and the present. He seemed very cheerful; only once, when I mentioned the name of his dead wife, did he betray any strong emotion.

"Your daughter looks very like her mother," I said.

"Yes," he answered, in a vacant, absent sort of manner, "I think she does."

A tear came into his eyes. He came often to Oak Side after this; he would hold his little girl for hours in his arms and appear totally absorbed in



gazing into her eyes; they were her mother's eyes. I caught him one day talking to her of her mother, and she came directly to me, asking if I was not her mother, and where heaven was.

He seemed to be pleased, I thought, with my Cousin Lucy, for I often found them chatting together; and Lucy always blushed deeply when I came suddenly upon them thus. He had invited her to ride; they had gone to the Mills and over to his farm together. I began to hope that the maiden who did not believe in love was caught in its meshes at last. I was not wrong. I found an old withered cluster of violets, which I remembered he had given her, carefully pressed and preserved in a book of hers; I was glad. But he did not seem to treat her with any more marked distinction than he had me. He invited me on the same excursions I invariably refused, knowing that he would then ask Lucy, who always accepted with a proud glow of satisfaction. Could it be possible that he did not see he was winning her affections? I soon found the key to the mystery. Lucy was jealous of me, and perhaps not without reason, for whenever I was present he addressed most of his remarks to me; he sometimes sought me alone; I avoided him; I strove to bring him and Lucy together. Was I a match-maker? Perhaps so. But I knew that man's future happiness depended on the possession and influence of a good and true wife. Lucy was just



suitied for him, and it was the dream of my heart to bring them together. But I soon awoke to my blunder. I had urged him to visit us frequently ; to make Oak Side his home for Lucy's sake. I did not dream of his construing it differently, until one morning he came in. I was alone with little Annie. She sought refuge on his knee, and pressing her little soft cheek against his, was cooing in his ear like a little dove. Presently I heard her whisper half aloud :

"Papa, where is mamma? Is Aunt Mattie my mamma?"

I smiled at the child's question ; but not so Captain Courtenay ; he looked very serious as he bade her run into the next room and play. She left the door ajar as she went out, and I heard Lucy humming an air to herself in the next room. She must have heard what he said :

"You have indeed been a mother to my child, Miss Klopenstene." He spoke in a very matter-of-fact sort of way. "Annie loved and trusted you ; can you trust yourself with me? Will you come home with me as my wife?"

I was so completely surprised at the question that I could not speak for some moments ; again did I pity the noble heart that I was obliged to wound with a repulse.

"Captain Courtenay, were I to look about me in search of a man with whom to link my fate, my life, I could find none more worthy than yourself ;

but I have long since resolved never to marry. I shall die an old maid."

"Forgive me, then. I presumed too much. I should have seen that you avoided me, that my attentions were not agreeable to you."

"As a brother I have always loved you; as a brother you will always be welcome to my roof; I shall ever treat you as a near relative. But for the sake of yourself and your little daughter, I would advise you not to remain single; your home needs a woman to preside over it; your daughter needs the constant care of a mother. Such I have striven to be to her; but she should be with you. Forgive my presumption, but I have not failed to discover that a true and noble heart has lavished its affection, perhaps unsought, upon you."

He looked somewhat surprised as he said, quietly :

"It is your Cousin Lucy you speak of."

"Yes; a girl every way worthy to fulfil the sacred duties of a wife and mother."

He sat still and thoughtful a moment; he brushed the hair up out of his eyes and ran his fingers through it.

"True, I had not thought of that. You think Lucy loves me?"

"I am sure of it."

He waited a moment; then gave me his hand.

"I thank you for your kindness. Good bye, Miss Klopstene. God bless you," and he went away.

I sat there a good while alone with my thoughts. What had he to thank me for? I had done nothing to deserve his thanks, excepting, perhaps, I had refused a noble heart without wounding that heart. All women have it in their power to send a man away from them thus. Few understand how to refuse a heart without wounding its pride—to send away the rejected with a blessing and a prayer on his lips for the woman whom he has lost. There is too much scorn, too much proud contempt in women of the day; they look upon a man as beneath them who strives to win where their own hearts respond not. Many a noble and manly heart has been ruined for ever by a harsh rebuff, because it has presumed to climb so high as wealth and beauty. Many a woman-hater has been made by a woman's hasty answer: "Begone, you are beneath my notice," and I think at the day of the final reckoning the name of the coquette will stand near to that of the murderer. The latter kills, and all pain is over; the former stabs, and leaves the rusting knife in the living heart. What more horrible in all the varied pictures of human nature than to see a noble manhood bowed at the feet of a trifling woman, his whole impassioned nature prostrate before the beautiful fiend, while she stands coldly back and laughs at his folly! Oh, trifler with human hearts, great will be the penalty that awaits such a sin!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*The Girl that did not believe in Love caught in the Meshes—  
The Lovers.*

I WENT into the next room.

"Where's Lucy?" I asked of Mrs. Whipple, who was sitting there, singing a hymn, with little Annie asleep in her arms.

"She went up stairs a while ago."

I went up to her room and entered softly. She was lying on the bed, her face hidden on the pillow and her brown curls thrown carelessly over it. She was sobbing, not loud but low and subdued, her little figure shaking all over. I went up to her and placed my hand on her head.

"Why, Lucy—Lucy, what's the matter with you, cousin?"

She clasped her hands tighter over her eyes to hide her tears, but I could see that they were wet.

"Come, tell me what ails you?" I said, coaxingly. But she only sobbed louder and lay perfectly still, saying not a word. I sat down upon the bedside and took her head upon my lap. She struggled a little to free herself; I kissed her flushed forehead and smoothed back the hair from her face; it was

very red from long weeping. I thought I knew what was the matter, and I determined to come at it at once.

"You are jealous of me, cousin, without reason, I assure you; come, confess that you love Captain Courtenay."

She lifted her head, and a bewildered look came into her eyes.

"Are you not to be his wife? Did I not hear him ask you to become the mother of his child? Oh, tell me, it is you he has been seeking all this time and not me. I loved him—yes, I loved him;" and the little face began to swell again with grief and sobs.

"Come, now, let me tell you all about it. He did ask me to become his wife, but I refused him. I am to live an old maid; have I never told you so? I am one now. There, does that please you?"

She looked at me again in a bewildered way.

"You refused *him*; is he not handsome, rich, and noble?"

"Are you sorry that I said so?"

"Yes, for he don't love me, and never will."

"Pshaw, you have too humble an opinion of yourself. I expect to see you married and the mistress of his home before a year. How odd it is! I thought you did not believe in such nonsense as love."

She did not answer me then, but her tears

suddenly vanished, and I courted her into a smile. She was a little shy of him when he came to the house the next time, and I think this very modesty enhanced her in his eyes, for he strove to draw her out of it. He was a good wooer, a rare thing in man. She did not come into the room as usual; but he sent little Annie to tell her that he wanted her, and she came in with the little burden in her arms. I knew that he was pleased, for he kissed the little girl, who promptly refused to leave Lucy's arms. I soon managed an excuse and went out of the room, leaving them there together.

The next I saw of them was as a pair of equestrians floating down the road. Lucy was a good rider, and drew a strong rein. I had not forgotten his objection to allowing Annie Glyde to learn, but Lucy was a much stronger person than my little dead angel had ever been, and he need have no reasonable fears for her safety. She sat firm in her saddle, was elastic and light, and she had learned the rare art of riding with ease as well as grace. If a pretty woman on horseback will not charm a man, his heart is harder than stone. Thus they occupied the afternoons, and sometimes the day together. His visits became more frequent, and I believe he learned to love her with a true affection, not with the strong fervor of his younger manhood—that love had gone out from him, he could never love again as he loved my gentle sister—but with a passive

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sort of love that comes to us in later years, when our passions are all subdued by trials and the weight of time. What mattered it if he did not love with that master passion? his love was great enough to control their lives and make them live in peace and unity together. My cousin Lucy seemed very happy, but with it all forgot her mischievous sallies on Mrs. Whipple, upon whom Mr. Jamieson still lavished his serious attentions.

It was a sort of serio-sober happiness that filled her heart now. She would sit in silence over her book for hours together in a sort of waking dream. The roses bloomed brighter on her cheeks, her eyes sparkled with a brighter light. I watched her, and for the first time thought her beautiful. Love is sometimes a great beautifier of woman. My cousin Lucy often fell into these moody fits of silence now; I never disturbed them, for I thought I knew the cause. There must be some great inward joy to light up the face as hers was; but her little heart could keep the secret no longer. She came to me one night, and sat down in a girlish fashion on a cushion at my feet.

"Cousin Mattie, why did you not marry Captain Courtenay?"

It was rather an abrupt question, but I was prepared to answer.

"Because I didn't love him."

"Was that all?"

"Yes, that is all the reason I can give you, for he is a very worthy gentleman."

"Well, if father consents, I have promised to marry; but I shall feel a little grudge against you for refusing him, he is so good, so noble and kind."

"I am very glad you think so, for that is just my opinion; he will make you a true husband, and you are just the woman for his wife."

"But do you think father will like my marrying a country gentleman whom he has never seen? Won't you write to him; he will leave it all to you, I know?"

I did write to him, and any father would have proudly accepted such a son-in-law as I pictured in true colors. Captain Courtenay wrote also. In a few days an answer came to both; he gave his consent, which was subject entirely to my approval. I might revoke it if I thought proper; but why should I stand between the loving heart of that sweet girl and her lover?

Captain Courtenay came over to Oak Side one evening; we were all gathered in the room.

"Have you heard from your father, Miss Lucy?"

"Yes, sir, but I have no power in the matter," said she, blushing.

I took her hand, led her over to him, and placed it in his.

"Take her, Captain Courtenay, and make her happy, for she lies very near my heart."

He drew her down beside him, she nestled close up, he threw his arm around her, and I heard the sound of the first betrothal kiss as their lips met. I could only distinguish the figures as they sat there in the summer twilight. Mrs. Whipple brought in lights; I sat down to the instrument and sang some old songs that I had almost forgotten, I so seldom played them. There was one that remained for ever unsung; it was one he had praised when he said in his low, deep tone: "It is very beautiful." The words occurred to me as I sat there that night in the presence of those happy lovers, and yet alone:

"My mother, too, has joined the throng,  
And in the distance dim  
I catch my mother's cradle-song,  
And hear my mother's hymn."

Some English traveller has said that the Americans are an unmusical people, and I think it is eminently true. They have not the concentration to devote long periods of time to so tedious a study as music, and they are not fond of it either. Occasionally an opera, a concert, or a vocalist, stirs them out from their social firesides; but they tire of it. A brass band within a hundred yards of a dwelling becomes a "nuisance;" a neighbor with musical daughters and a singing family is complained of as noisy; and no matter how sweet and

heavenly may be the sound of harp and guitar, you find few of them in American homes; they prefer a quiet, domestic life, where the only music is that of the prosperous workshop and the laughter and accents of little children.

## CHAPTER XXX.

*A Letter—Gone into Battle.—The Gloom.—What my Heart said unto my Hands.*

JOHN DAY brought me a letter this morning. What made my heart flutter so? Why did my hand tremble and my eye fail me as I strove to read its contents. I thought the years had cured me of all these things. I began to think the memory of *him* had grown powerless; but the grave in my heart was not deep enough, the stone rolled away, and the disembodied spirit of the past stood resurrected before me. I was again the weak unstrung woman, groping about in my helplessness; without a stay, without a strong heart on which to lean, without a supporting human arm, I could only gaze beyond my tears and look up. Oh, men, when you point the finger of scorn and derision at the isolated woman who struggles along in this life alone in the world until the years have bestowed on her the title of "old maid," remember that her soul with its burdens can only sit down in its loneliness, waiting and bearing; that for her there is no human heart beating with the sympathies of love—she has no husband, no protector; that for her no little

children rise up, and pressing their velvety cheeks to hers, whisper the consoling name of "mother;" that for her life is a vast desert, without one green oasis for her weary feet, through which she is travelling alone, with the multitudinous caravan of life, out towards the dark and gloomy shores that skirt the river of death. I sat still a long time before the pain went out of my eyes, and I read it with the calmness that you will, my reader. It was a very brief letter. The words were few, very few, to cause me so much agitation. It was written in a bold hand. I knew the name that would appear at the end before I broke the seal:

"My ——." (I cannot reveal to you what he wrote in that blank, in the place of my name; it was meant only for me.) "By the time this reaches you I shall be on the field of battle. God has given me health and strength, I think, for a noble strife. I go out sword in hand to fight the fight of freedom. My country called me, and I could not stay. Your name shall be my watchword, and with it on my lips I fear not death. Pray for me. I think I shall not come out alive, but you are mine and I am yours in eternity.

"JOHN GUILDERSTRING."

This was all I had ever heard of him since he went out across my father's threshold on a night



away back in the years. In pursuing the thread of my story I have not spoken of the rumors of war that came to us from the land of the Southern sun; how the tiny speck of cloud, not so big as a human hand, in our political horizon had gathered strength and might until it had swollen into a gloom that was now sweeping in a stormy tornado over our land. We had "read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel." The blighting horror of civil war was desolating thousands of homes. The North had risen like a tardy giant from its slumbers, and the weaker South lifted up her frail arms to push us back. That sublimest edict of later civilization had been penned and proclaimed to the remotest corner of the land. The heart of the slave leaped in its chains as he saw the glory of the coming Lord. The plantations of rice and cotton were no longer trodden by the foot of a slave. All men, black or white, were virtually free. Our looms stood still and waited for the day when they should be fed with cotton resulting from free labor. The shout on every Northern and loyal lip was the battle-cry of freedom.

Far away over the seas, in their island home, the English factory operatives were crying for bread, and the great British Lion was growling ominously because of this thorn in its paw. This strictly neutral nation was showing its cloven foot in fitting out ships to prey upon our commerce. The white

sails of ships laden with rich argosies of wealth, were espied on their outward-bound and homeward courses by the merciless fiends, the freebooting privateers ; and away out in mid-ocean, where no eye but God's witnessed the tragical drama, where no helping hand was near to render aid, the noble craft, one by one, were crackling in the flames and sinking charred and blackened down into the depths. I am not a politician ; I have not even the law of nations bound up in my brain. I will not ask of England and her people, Was this law ? But I only ask of the mother country, Was it justice, was it neutrality ? And as soon as the query leaves my lips, I sit still ; I accuse not, reproach not, but only wait and hope that the answer will come back over the seas that it was the action of a few mean, sordid ship-builders, lured on by the hope of lining their pockets with gold, and not sanctioned by one of the noblest governments and the most civilized people on the face of the earth.

This is not a tome of political wisdom, and perhaps I have gone astray in introducing the subject into a book like this. But the present part of my story leads me to descant on what was occurring in the political economy of my country ; and I could not but pen a word of truth on the shameful breach of what seems to me so sacred a compact as the profession of neutrality in a war like ours. Need I go on to describe the painful scenes that were

everywhere occurring in the length and breadth of our once happy land. Every American heart has sat down in painful agony to look over the record of death with a darkened vision. They listen in vain for the sweet low hush of the nation's hymn—that old anthem of joy going up to God in thanks for peace and prosperity; but, like a great wailing, sobbing heart, they see a nation sitting down like a mourner in sackcloth and ashes; and a voice goes up like that of supplication above the din of the conflict: “Lord, have mercy.” The woe of Egypt has darkened each threshold—mothers crying for their first-born, fathers kneeling in agony on the lone grave of the soldier son, firesides darkened by the shadow of death, and war weaving a shroud about the nameless and homeless. They see a nation that was busy at the altar giving and taking in marriage; they see her in the lurid flash of war's charnel-lamp burying her dead. And what has all this to do with me and my life's story? I will tell you. I heard a still small voice within me crying, You are alone; you have no ties to keep you back; you have wealth at your command; take up the half-wasted thread of your life and go out to meet your work. The field is before you; the laborers are few; the harvest has need of many. I saw a vision of my suffering countrymen; I heard the great discordant hymn of human suffering coming up from the battle-fields and the hospitals—the groans of the dying, the

cries of the wounded and the bleeding; and my heart said unto my soul, Come, let us go out together. He is calling us; the angels of faith, love, and charity, beckon us; come, let us follow. "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free." And we went out together, my heart and I; we were co-workers; and when I look back over the scenes in which we mingled, as I sit here in my disabled condition, I say unto my heart—We are happy; we are soldiers of the Union; we have fought the good fight.

That little boy with his sunny, curly head, who looked up at me out of his glazed eyes from his couch of pain and whispered, "Mother has come," and nestled his head on my bosom—my bosom, I who was childless—mistaking me for his mother, oh, surely I shall meet him beyond the river. And that noble-browed youth, strong in his young manhood, lying at death's shadowy portal, a wounded body but an unbroken spirit, calling on the names of his dear ones—who made me his amanuensis that he might write the sad tidings to his beloved—surely, surely, we have not parted for ever. The love that sprang up in my heart for these cannot be only a transitory, earthly thing, that will not spring up again in eternity.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

*Mrs. Whipple's Departure—News—The Parting—Knitting Socks  
—Gone to the War.*

MRS. WHIPPLE was at last about to leave the state of single blessedness. Had I remained at Oak Side, I know that I should have missed her fervent renditions of Watts's celebrated Hymns, as well as the labor of her hands. It was a pleasant, sunshiny morning when Mr. Jamieson drove up to the door in his old-fashioned English coach, adorned with a coat of arms so faint and indistinct as to have been worthy of the ancient date when his forefathers are said to have gloried in it. I never saw two more practical, matter-of-fact sort of lovers. Mr. Jamieson was very attentive to the harness, and the horses in particular, running from side to side, inspecting their shapely limbs, and stroking their glossy manes. He kept good horses, and kept them well—a great recommendation to any man. He buckled a strap here, and impatiently straightened a trace there, until at last Mrs. Whipple appeared in her stately and stiffly-starched grandeur. She stood for some time alone amid the confusion of her innumerable band-boxes and sundry trunks. Her personal effects con-

stilted her only dowry ; she was a thrifty woman, and had accumulated a great many. When her abstracted and covetous lover spied her out at last, I think he was glad to see that her wardrobe was at least so voluminous.

They were to have no wedding, but drive directly to the village, have the ceremony performed, and go thence to her new home, which Mr. Jamieson, with his English notions, had christened Castle Jamieson. Lucy laughed a good deal at the figure cut by the two as they got into the coach, with its load of baggage and elevated driver. Mrs. Whipple had been a faithful servant to me ; she had been near me ever since my mother died ; and in spite of her eccentricities, I had learned to love her. Her face was associated with all that was dear to me, and I pressed her close to my heart as she went away. I only feared that she heard Lucy's laugh when she drew her great flaming handkerchief forth to dry her eyes. She went away to her new home, and I do not think that her future has been an unhappy one ; at any rate, I know that her husband is not disappointed ; he had his wish—he gained a good housekeeper at the Castle ; and as I am drawing near the close of my story, let the coach carry Mrs. Whipple, with her oddities, out of our sight for ever.

“No more ‘Poor Jerries’ and Watts’s Hymns now, cousin. How we shall miss her,” said Lucy, half-soberly.



I did not answer, for I respected the memory of my old housekeeper. Alas! poor Lucy's mischievous spirit was fated soon to be damped. Captain Courtenay came to Oak Side towards evening, and he had startling news to tell. I was sitting on the porch with Lucy; he asked to see me alone. I saw Lucy's face pale as we went in.

"Have you heard the news?" he said.

"No. What's the matter? You look agitated."

"I have reason to be so. The enemy have crossed the State border and are ravaging and pillaging the country for miles around them in their onward course; they are not fifty miles distant from us now. I have volunteered to take command of a company of men who have agreed to serve under me in the emergency. I can't tell Lucy. Will you tell her for me? She and Annie had better be sent home to her father for safety, for who knows how soon the merciless foe may be even here. I will go out and say good-bye to her as usual; she had better not know it until I am gone."

He went to her, made some excuse for absenting himself, kissed her, and lingered much longer than was usual with him in parting, and went away. It was a cruel blow for poor Lucy, who had so lately learned the bliss of love. She seemed to divine something wrong, for she looked at me with a querying gaze and said:



"You must tell it to me; I am not afraid; I can bear it."

I drew her head down on my shoulder and told her what I had learned. It is strange how some women, apparently weak and feminine in ordinary life, can display such grand masculine heroism in emergencies. She did not weep, did not cry out or tremble with fear, but merely said quietly:

"He knows best; but if he is killed I shall never marry."

She caught my arm as she said this; they were my own words to her not long ago. I told her that it was his wish that she should return to her father; she did not murmur, but the next day, cheerful and uncomplaining, taking little Annie with her, she went away to her father's house. But she carried one precious thing with her—a letter from her lover, containing fresh assurances of his love; for true love is so exacting that it must have new vows registered every day as it begins to feel a lack of inspiration. The old house was very lonely to me now, and it was at this time that I received an offer from a great and beneficent woman, whose name I shall not mention here, to take a post in a hospital of my native State. I was quite matronly now; my hair was flecked with grey and silver, and I had adopted the white cap of my elders. I determined to go out and answer this call: "Be swift, my soul, to meet Him; be jubilant, my feet." I would leave all my

affairs in the hands of John Day during my absence. I had failed as yet in procuring a new housekeeper, and Aunt Dinah could remain with John Day. Uncle Peter, the gardener, would have enough to do in keeping the grounds in order. It was a summery, sunshiny afternoon when the three Sweezey sisters sat in a row knitting, while Jemima gave me a hundred old recipes of her mother or great-grandmother, for the benefit of the sick among whom I was going. I cannot repeat one of them now; but she gave me much general information that was of great service to me. I had often wondered what those three sisters could do with so many woollen socks, for they were so continually knitting they must have accumulated an immense number since I had known them. I asked Jemima. She said:

“Last week we sent one hundred pairs to the hospital at C——, and we are now making up another fifty for the same place. Why, bless thee, it keeps me awake o’ nights to think o’ the poor soldiers trudging along without stockings. To think of me, with my crop of corns, marching for days together without stockings. I should have to use a box of the patent Corn-Plaster every day of my life.”

Many days afterwards, when I stood over couches of pain, misery, and suffering, did I look back and recall their pleasant faces as they sat there that summer’s afternoon knitting socks for the needy soldiers. It was not without some grief that I went

out from my home, dear old Oak Side, for the first time in my life alone. But I had arrived at that age now when, if a woman has not succeeded in procuring an escort in the shape of a husband or protector, she is not scandalized by travelling alone.

I could have travelled all over the North and only met with the disinterested acts of kindness that American gentlemen are so noted for bestowing on unprotected and elderly ladies.

I looked over towards the old house at the Pines, its ashes so full of old memories. The shutters were all closed at Oak Side; and very bleak and lonely looked the mansion of my departed father as I left it that summer morning to go out to meet, alas! I knew not what. The perfume of the flowers clung to me, and the air from the clover-fields wandered about me and blew up into my face. I left none mourning for me but one—yes, one good faithful heart in a black casket. Did she weep only instinctively as a dog cries for his master? No; I think not. I believe Aunt Dinah's heart held a true and deep affection for me; and with the kiss of her black lips on my hand, I went out without a mother's or a father's blessing, without a good-bye on any dear lip—alone.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

*In the Hospital—The Battle—Captain Courtenay's Wound—  
My Confession.*

THE dim and flaring lamps burned low as they swung in scattered isolation in the vast and silent amphitheatre of the soldiers' rest. I was on duty with a corps of nurses, and as I paced back and forth through the ward, the occasional groan of some suffering hero, the half-indistinct, muttered whisper of some lisping dreamer, the subdued sigh of some weary heart, the groan of some languishing and feverish soul, came up to me like a language of misery from the long row of couches that stretched away, until they seemed to grow small and almost indistinct in the distance. My heart grew sick when I first heard these things; but a month had passed in the service, and I grew strong in my labor.

"Cold water," cried a once strong and sinewy man, now weak and feverish on a couch, powerless to help himself.

I handed him the longed-for drink, and as he cooled his parched and burning lips, I fancied that the Saviour must have thought of the scorching

heat of feverish delirium when he said : "He that giveth a cup of cold water," &c. Dr. Woodruff was there, and a man over all blessed for ever he must have seemed to the sick and suffering. They learned to know his step ; they would hear him enter at the further end of the ward ; and those at a distance would wait with signs of impatience for his coming. Smiles greeted him on all sides ; and in the dim and dark hereafter, when the silent lapse of years shall have ushered him into eternity, I think those same smiles will greet him there. Verily his reward will be great. I had a talk with him that evening ; he came over to me ; I was bathing the brow of a delirious patient at No. 23. That was all I knew about the sick man ; he was unable to speak ; I only knew him as No. 23. The patients were mostly known by the numbers that were pasted over the couches that stretched on either side of the vast pavilion. I folded up my napkin, for the sufferer had gone gently and quietly to sleep under the cool and soothing strokes of the wet cloth. I sat down.

"There are not enough empty beds," said Dr. Woodruff ; "we shall soon have many additional patients to care for."

I trembled a little at his words.

"What ! Is there a battle raging, Doctor ?" I asked.

"No ; but before the sun rises and sets again the

blood of many a brave heart will be spilled ; there is a battle impending, the terrible havoc and slaughter of which no human tongue can fore-picture."

He spoke very low in order that the patients should not be disturbed or alarmed by the intelligence. I listened with a fearful intensity of interest as he went on :

"The enemy have crossed the border and invaded the homes of peace and quietude ; they seem to be striking for this city ; but a strong and mighty army has gone out to check them, and when the opposing forces meet, God help the weak, say I, and teach the strong to be merciful ; but whoever the victor may be, we have a great work to do."

I was very glad of Dr. Woodruff's presence—glad that we had been allotted the same ward, he was so calm, dignified, and quiet, amid all the woe and lamentation that filled my heart to bursting ; he was a stay to me, and I learned to feel towards him a very close friendship. I was not surprised when I met him there ; he was a noble philanthropist, and I knew he would be amongst the first to answer the call for aid.

The Doctor's prediction proved to be founded on a correct judgment, a keen foresight of the motives that swayed the two armies. On the morning of the third day we heard a faint, indistinct sound, like muffled and distant thunder ; it swelled into a jarring and mighty conflict of sounds, until



my heart stood still, and I was seized with a desire to stop my ears and shut it out. I imagined I heard the cries of the wounded and dying; I could distinguish curses and prayers, the clash of arms, the booming of cannon, amid the din of the conflict. My face was very white when the ambulances came up, like hearses, with their living, suffering burdens, one after another, to the hospital door. Bloody haversacks were scattered about on the crimsoned floor; bayonets were lying about, reddened, perchance, with the life-blood of somebody lying stark and stiff out on the battle-field. Here was a plumed hat, dusty and begrimed, and there a stained sword, with no one to claim them. Did I shudder at the strange and novel sight for a woman—the horribly mangled bodies, bleeding and broken, like frail reeds in the storm, that were carried in and laid out on the pallets before me? Yea, I was sick unto death; only the invisible arm that encircled me kept up my fainting courage. In that moment of confused terror I felt a sublime faith getting the better of fear. I stood firm as a rock, quenching the flowing blood as Dr. Woodruff probed the bleeding wounds and bound up the bruised and broken limbs. I flinched not; and if there is such a thing as deserting one's individuality entirely, I had lost my identity. I was no longer Martha Kloppenstone; I was merely a passive instrument in the hands of God, which He was using for His own



purposes. I felt like a disembodied spirit; I wished for wings that I might fly more swiftly to meet my destiny. But presently I was brought back to myself. A new comer was brought into the ward; I was first attracted by the dress that proclaimed him an officer.

I went over to him, leaning on the arm of Dr. Woodruff. A glimmer of the truth was just dawning on my mind, when Dr. Woodruff exclaimed, with some emotion:

“My God! it’s Courtenay.”

It was indeed my cousin Lucy’s lover, but he looked very unlike the man I had seen go out from Oak Side a short time back. His face was blackened and disfigured by powder, his beard singed and charred to a crisp, and a crimson pool had gathered at his side, into which a little stream of blood was trickling down from his left arm. He was so exhausted from the loss of blood that he was entirely helpless; but he smiled his thanks as we lifted him up and assisted him to a couch, where we dressed his wound. I was sorry to hear Dr. Woodruff say that his arm was broken, and in such a shocking manner that he would be disabled for life. It would never again be supple and pliant, but a stiff, dead, and nerveless thing. We applied anodynes, for he was in much pain, and we finally left him asleep to go and attend others waiting for our help.

It was a sublime sight to see that bevy of women, like ministering spirits, waiting on strong men, now laid low and helpless. All that day they came, ambulance after ambulance of wounded, and still we took them in.

It was towards evening when Dr. Woodruff came over to me again :

"Courtenay is awake, and is asking for you," he said.

I went over to him. His first question was of Lucy. Was she well?

"Don't tell her about this; I will go to her myself when I am better."

I promised not to mention his mishap in writing to her, as I did occasionally. He looked at me a moment, as if studying my power of endurance.

"I have something to tell you," he said abruptly, and stopped, as if hesitating whether to impart it or not.

I stood pale and still, looking right down into his calm, truthful eyes. I trembled a moment, a faintness came over me, my knees clung together, but I did not sink to the earth. I think I read his thoughts in his eyes. What meant that pitying look, that expression of sorrowful commiseration! He took hold of my hand, in his brotherly manner, and held it tight as he said: "I have seen *him*."

Need I have asked who? But I did; I must have the certainty.

“Who?”

“John Guilderstring.”

My hand shook in his as he went on :

“He fought nobly and bravely ; I saw him in the hottest of the battle ; he once saved my life by coming between me and an uplifted bayonet ; and to me he told a secret—the secret of his love for you.” He dropped his voice lower as he asked : “And this is why you never married?”

I put my head down to his ear ; I had never told mortal man the secret ; he asked it ; he was my brother, and I whispered it with a throbbing heart as I said : “It is.”

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

*The Enemy's Retreat—Number 23—William Hartless—I have told God only—In his Arms—The Meeting of Lips and the Parting on the Shores of Time.*

I PITY the human heart that could pulse in the midst of what was occurring about me and not shrink within itself. The low depressed moans, the thrilling cries, the groans of men maddened with pain, the horrible chorus of human suffering and misery, must have gone up to the ear of Christ. Oh, if He could only have walked again on the waves of discord, and said unto the storm of passions: "Peace, be still!"

We heard the distant boom of artillery at intervals throughout the night; there was a lull in the remote strife, and presently the welcome cry came up from the street: "They fly! they fly! We pursue!"

I was weary with the exhaustion of so long continued labor. Nature began to assert her power and her right. I was almost asleep. I started up at the cry and went out. I met Dr. Woodruff. He was busy superintending the removal of some wounded from an ambulance that had just come up from the scene of the conflict. Those who were

brought in now were bruised and mangled much more terribly than the first. It was after battle, and these were unable to help themselves or cry out for assistance. Dr. Woodruff put his hand over my eyes as I came up.

"Go in," he said; "this is not a fitting sight for you."

Captain Courtenay had recovered so far as to be about, with his arm resting in a sling; and offering me his strong arm, he led me in again.

"You must be very weary," he said.

"No, I do not feel tired in the least; there is a stimulus in what is occurring around me that braces me up."

We went over towards my patient at No. 23; he was much better, and began to take some interest in what was going on. He looked at me very closely a moment, and said in a low, weak voice: "Excuse me, madam, for my scrutiny, but I have surely seen your face somewhere before."

I thought he might have seen me in his delirium, and the memory of my face, as it appeared to him then, was what he remembered.

"I have been near you in your illness; of course you must have seen me then."

"No, no; I have seen you elsewhere; let me see. Were you ever at—Hopkins's Mills?"

I started at the question. "Yes, I have been there frequently."

"Do you remember taking a boat ride with an acquaintance of mine several years ago?"

"I do," I answered, with emotion; "and you—your name is William Hartless?"

"It is the same. Perhaps I am impudent, but forgive the question—Did you marry that man?"

I must have looked very white, for Captain Courtenay lent me his support as I answered, "No."

"Thank God for that!" he exclaimed. "It has been the sorrow of my life since then that I did not expose the secret to you as a warning; but now it is well. It was I who burned his house to ashes. I thought it was his; but it was a sorry mistake, for the house belonged to your worthy father. But that man, he has ruined my life; he poisoned the heart of the girl that I loved; he killed her, murdered her—the villain——"

He spoke vehemently, his face inflamed with passion. I lifted up my hands; I spoke very fiercely, I guess, for the man obeyed me.

"Stop, stop! For God's sake say no more! I know it all; the secret is mine!"

Again I felt the need of a strong arm to keep up my fainting soul and aid me in these hours of trial. Alas! I knew not half the day, the cruel day, was to bring forth. Captain Courtenay led me to a chair and went away. I sat there a long time with my face pressed in my hands. Was I dreaming? No,



it could not be a dream. It was too distinct, too earthly, to come from so ethereal a source. I heard some one say : " God help her ! For heaven's sake don't let her see him, Doctor ! 'Take him up gently.'" It was Captain Courtenay's voice. All animation seemed to be suspended, and for a moment I was dizzy. My soul knew who that "him" and "her" meant, but a great calm settled down in my heart as I slowly drew my hands away from my eyes. The first thing I saw was a tall form stretched upon a pallet. The face was turned from me, designedly I think. They had removed his uniform, but from the care bestowed upon him, I thought it was an officer of some rank. I saw a small crimson spot on the white bosom of the shirt, and I think the sensations that came over me then were just about the same as he must have experienced when the leaden messenger passed through his body.

"Don't come here, Miss Klopenstene ; I beg of you, don't come near the patient !"

Captain Courtenay came up and offered me his arm ; but alas ! I heard not, saw not, heeded not. I had caught a glimpse of the pale and ghastly features. It was he, John Guilderstring. His soft, wavy brown hair was clotted with coagulated blood. I went up and brushed it off the pale brow. I think I lived, moved, spoke, and acted my part mechanically.

"Will he live ?" I asked, so coolly and calmly, that

both the Doctor and Captain looked at me with surprise.

"I think not," said Doctor Woodruff, candidly. "I fear the ball has pierced his lungs."

I stood there like a statue, cold and still, looking at the Doctor while he probed the wound, every probe of the instrument going down as deep into my own heart as it did into the lacerated flesh ; but it was useless. They soon discovered that it had passed entirely through the body, and gone out on the other side. He lay like one already under the shadow of death, and had it not been for the almost imperceptible motion of his chest, I should have thought him dead. But the Doctor was indefatigable in his exertions to restore life, and presently the breath became more regular, the lips parted, the blood came up into the livid cheeks, his eyes opened, and as they fell on me he closed them again, as if to assure himself that he was awake. He spoke my name very pitifully ; there was no reproach in his tone.

"Martha, Martha ! What ! you here ?"

I heard Captain Courtenay say hurriedly : "Come away, Doctor, and leave them alone."

I waited until they were gone, and then I went over to his bedside. He caught my hand and held it firmly in his as he said :

"I shall not live long, my love, my life ; but you will come to me in eternity, will you not ? You promised me, you know ; have you forgotten it ?"

I stooped down lower and lower as he went on.

"Did you ever love me, Martha? Say, oh, say it now! Tell me before I die. I shall not linger many minutes. It will be a glorious thing to carry into eternity. I shall be happier if I know it!"

I stooped down until his hair brushed my cheeks.

"Yes, I love you. I have told God only how deeply I have loved you."

His eyes lighted up with a heavenly smile as he drew me down closer, closer, until our lips met.

Only One knoweth what he said to me then and what I whispered to him.

"My wife now," he murmured. "Yes, you are mine now, mine now! But tell me, Martha, why you would not marry me; tell it me yourself again. I know it, but tell me in your own sweet voice; and then tell me that you forgive me."

I spoke very low.

"John Guilderstring, I never married you because of one fatal error of your youth. You know it. I forgive you now, as I have long since forgiven you."

His arms were very weak now, but he pressed me to his bosom in a closer embrace, until suddenly they relaxed, and he murmured in a low tone, half whisper:

"Martha—mine—mine in eternity!"

I rose up. He was dead. And now let the curtain of eternal silence fall upon the last scene of a

life which, but for its one early error, might have had a high and holy aim.

I found myself no longer able to fulfil my duties. The events of the last few days had so shattered my health that I was completely prostrated. I went away with Captain Courtenay ; but the sound of his funeral march went with me, the pall was on my heart, the pale face looking up at me—the pale face of *him*—the lonely spot where we buried him ; and I could only look up beyond to the smiling face behind the cloud, and listen to a voice which said: “I have forgiven his sin.”

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Life's Afternoon—Conclusion.*

A YEAR has slipped away—a swift bead from the rosary of time—since I came out of the furnace of fiery trial. I am older now as I sit here by the open casement. You would not know me, so thickly has the grey mingled itself in with the black of earlier years. It is a summer's day; the honey-bees are murmuring pleasant things to themselves in the garden as they glide in and out of the flowers, stealing the sweets from the red hearts of the roses; and the humming-birds come on golden wings, reaching their long bills and purple necks into the trumpet flowers and honeysuckles.

I feel very tranquil as I sit down here at Oak Side in the afternoon of life, looking back over the glistening milestones on the journey, and the burdens that I bore in the heat of the day.

I gave a dinner-party yesterday. It did my soul good to see the happy and smiling faces that clustered around my board. Captain Courtenay and Cousin Lucy were there, happy in the bliss of a life-union. Mr. and Mrs. Jamieson sat opposite, and

I think the latter had forgotten to mourn her "poor, dear Jerry" in her new state.

The three Sweezey sisters also partook of the repast. A few more wrinkles have gathered on Jemima's stately brow, but she is yet a hale and cheerful woman at sixty. I think she remembers still the old feud about the cabbage, and I was very careful that Dinah should not place any before them. Dr. Woodruff was not there; he was still away on a mission of mercy in some distant hospital. Dr. Thornton was suddenly called to see some remote patient, and may he have pity on the poor victim. Miss Swanson, the city belle and flirt, was at last caught like a silly fly by some wily spider. She had married a worthless wretch who soon made away with her dowry, and gone back in grief and mortification to her father's house.

Deacon Mudge occupied the seat where my poor father's face was always seen in days lang syne. There were but two more missing from that famous and remarkable dinner of thirteen. *He* was not there. And the frail girl, that living dream of beauty, my beloved sister, *she* was not there. Is that not she, that little sunny creature seated by my side? Those are Annie Glyde's eyes, her hair—but no, she is too robust; she has her mother's features, but inherits the hardier nature of her father. She refuses to leave me; she has been with me since my return to Oak Side, and I love her with



some of that great indissoluble affection which I had for the sweet girl I met at Hoylestown, away back in the years, the memory of whose sweet face and gentle spirit looms up and will linger with me as long as God gives me a heart to remember.

And now you will ask me why I wrote this book? I did write it with a purpose. Perhaps it was to show how a great overshadowing evil in the society of the present age might be corrected. If a woman loses her balance and falls into the abyss of infamous shame and sin, she is shunned as a foul and deadly thing; her name is no longer pronounced in the circle where she may have once been the bright and particular star. Virtuous men do not seek her society nor link their fates with hers; but, like a leper, she is cast out with her taint to struggle a little while, to wander like a vagabond over the face of the earth—and die.

Look on the other picture, and contrast the two. A man, the very man who seduces from the high and holy path of virtue, comes away from the accomplishment of his hellish work and goes into the drawing-rooms of virtue and respectability; no shadow rises up like a spirit of retribution to whisper the scandal. If, perchance, his sin is echoed about, how leniently he is looked upon; and, with shame I say it, many a virtuous and noble woman has bestowed her hand upon such a man while knowing of his sins; they are only follies which are passed over

and gone ; he will live a better life. But moral works of fiction are not the place for sermons ; and, perchance, if my reader has failed to perceive the moral, I shall equally fail in pointing it out.

The twilight deepens, the sun is sending back her argosies of clouds laden with the tints of lands beyond the setting portals. I see a ladder in the purple glow stretching up to the rim of the golden suffusion that fills the sky ; and my thoughts, like spirits, ascend and descend in a silent communion with the dim land beyond its borders.

The bees have hummed themselves to sleep, the birds have gone to their nests, darkness creeps into the window-pane and obscures my vision, and I must close for ever the story of John Guilderstring's Sin.

THE END.

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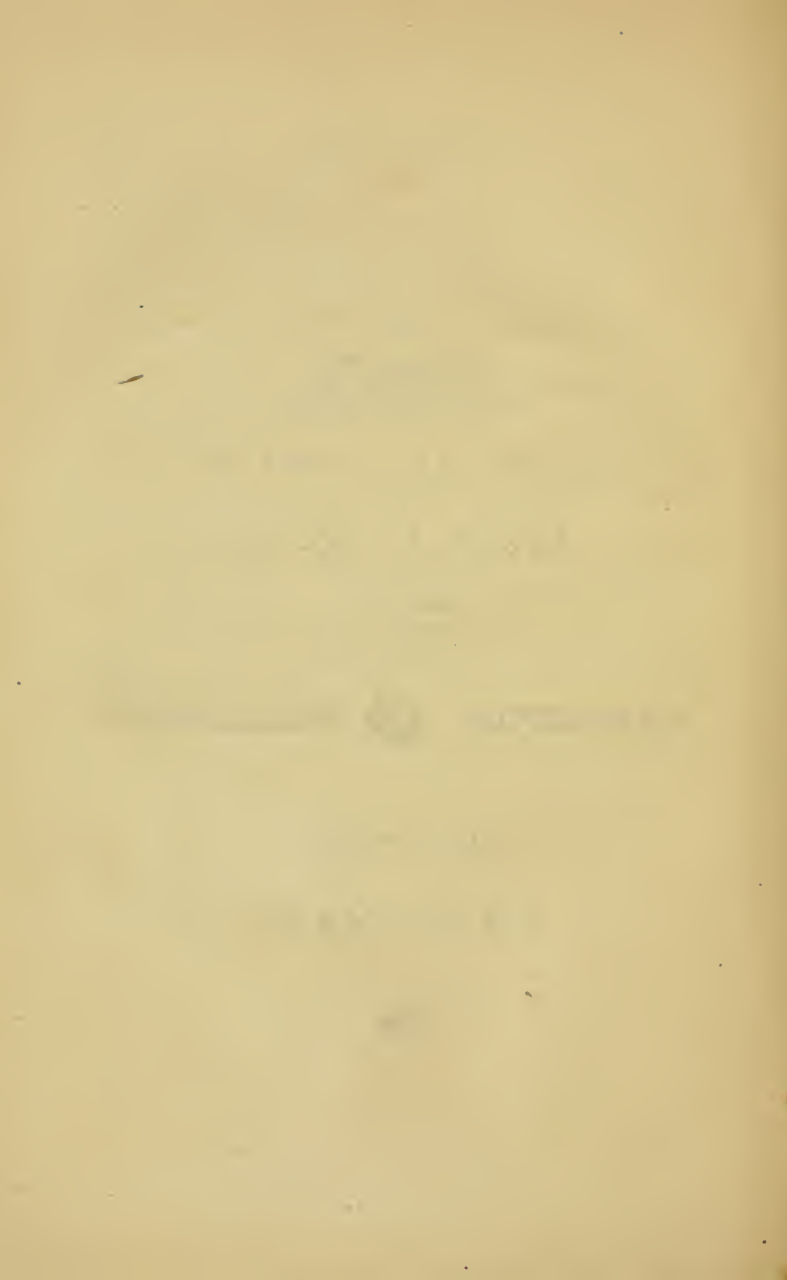
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